

STELLAR FABLE ORACLE DECK

Practical Aphorisms for
Connecting the Dots

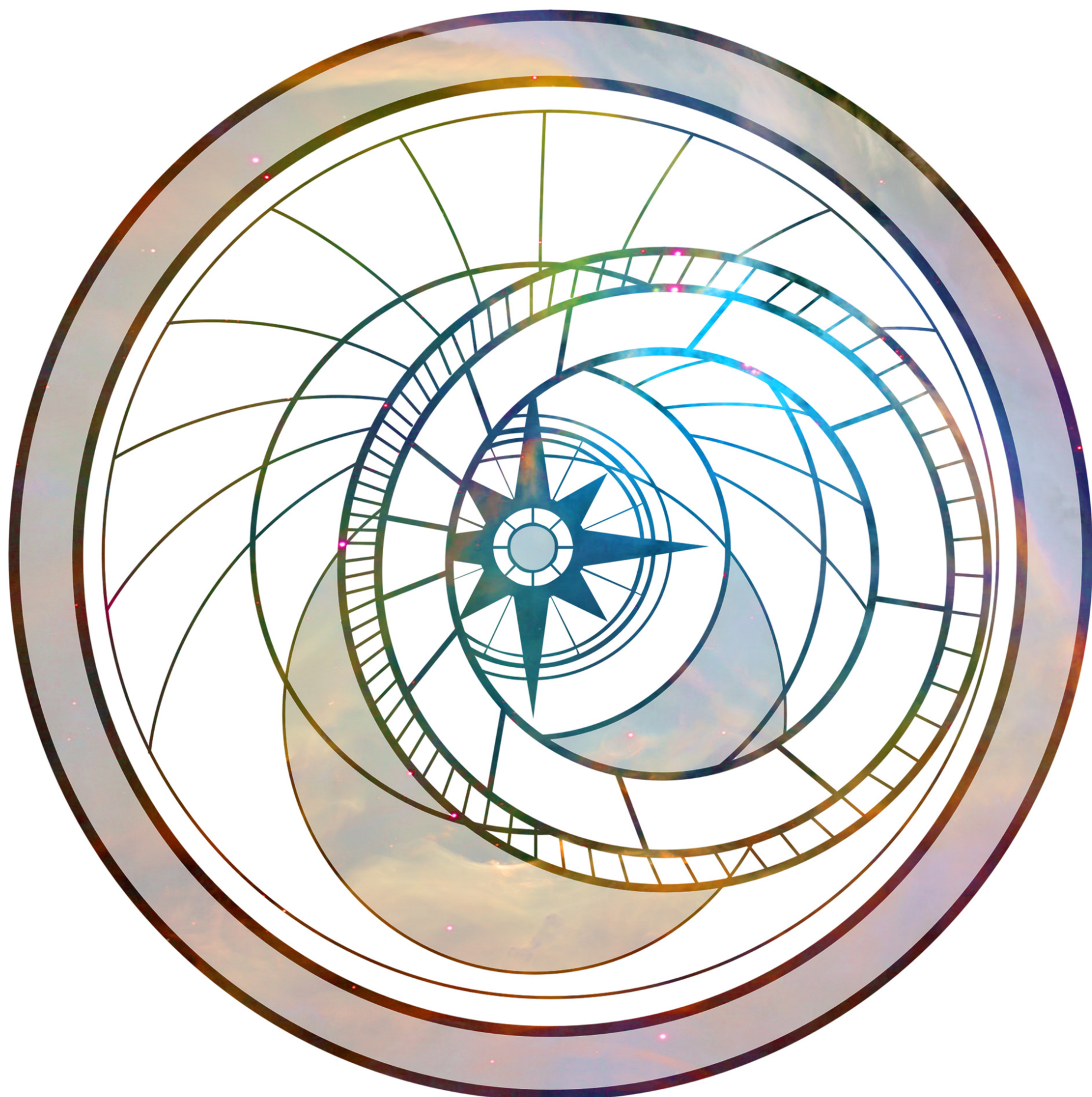


Calley Smith

To Truth, the queen of virtues, mother of
muses, and creatrix of the universe, who
holds the highest seat in all of heaven.

Sophia, I invoke thee in the
telling of these fables.

I offer of myself what grains of insight I've
collected, and hope that they find their
way into the right hands at the right time
for the highest good of us all.



NAVIGATION:

Divination Method

Alpaca

Auroch

Axolotl

Badger

Bat

Beaver

Boar

Bubble

Butterfly

Camel

Capybara

Caribou

Cat

Cicada

Coatl

Coelacanth

Conch

Coyote

Crane

Crocodile

Crystal

Dolphin

Dragonfly

Elephant

Emu

Feather

Fern

Firefly

Fox

Frog

Fungus

Goat

Hawk

Hedgehog

Honeybee

Horse

Hydra

Iguana

Incense

Jaguar

Jellyfish

Jerboa

Kangaroo

Kirin

Lobster

Lotus

Lynx

Manta

Monkey

Monolith

Moth

Octopus

Otter

Owl

Pangolin

Phoenix

Rain

Raven

Rooster

Sabertooth

Seagull

Seahorse

Seal

Seed

Shark

Snail

Snow

Spice

Spider

Stag

Tiger

Tree

Turtle

Volcano

Waterfall

Well

Wheat

Will o Wisp

Wyvern

Yak


Outcomes

Divination Method

How to Consult the Stellar Fable Oracle

Oracles are places to go when you suspect you have lost something, and are either rewarded with something you didn't realize you had misplaced or told you never had it to begin with. They offer insight into things not obvious enough to be seen, and so appear to have a mystical or psychic quality, but all of their observations are ones we are able to discover on our own if we can simply get outside of our fixed point of view. If you feel yourself running circles around a problem, it may be that the perceived obstacle can be easily sidestepped when approached from a different direction! This deck, like the stars that inspired it, is meant to be a light in the darkness, and is particularly helpful when one has lost their bearings.

This deck may be used standalone, or in tandem with other divination methods. A rule of thumb might be to use it first,




when a problem isn't clearly identified or a specific question is not quite known. In order to solve a problem, it is essential to admit that there is one, then examine its causes and effects. This isn't always easy to do when you find yourself in the thick of it, or have more of an intuitive foreboding or sense that something isn't right without specific evidence to back it.

This deck is beneficial for situations where the issue at hand is difficult to narrow down. For a quick reading to help get the ball rolling, you will draw three cards to explore the dynamics of the energy currently at play in and around the subject. Think of the situation like a story, where the cards may represent the characters at play in a very direct way, even embodying their personalities.

This could pertain to any arena of the subject's life, be it love, work, ambition, family, and so on. If they desire a specific topic to be explored, set that intention at the start of the read by having them settle into their body with a few deep breaths and focus on the present

moment. Then a phrase such as, “Oracle, what messages do you have for me about lessons in my journey, in the interest of my authentic self?” or, “I’ve been practicing mindfulness in the area of relationships, can you offer me some guidance with a challenge I am experiencing so that I can proceed with integrity and grace?” It’s a good idea to say this out loud, and even better to write it out and take notes as you go along with the reading on any ‘Aha!’ moments or takeaways you would like to be sure to remember moving forward.

The elemental characteristics of the characters in your story might highlight some differences in the way energy is being exchanged, and sometimes this detail alone can be very helpful in identifying sources of tension. If one of the parties has a very earthy personality, and wants to take things slow, while the other is quite fiery and darts about impatiently, they might have a classic tortoise and hare situation on their



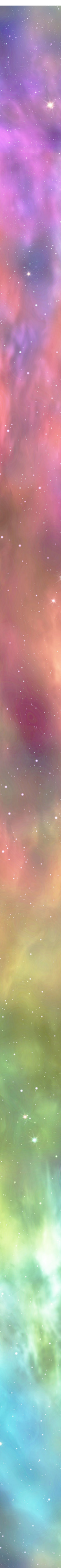
hands! The story unfolds from these foundational blocks, so try to think about what's going on in terms of energy, how it is being given and received, and that might help identify areas where change or redirection is needed. The elements are the mediums through which we express ourselves.

Earth is associated with the physical realm, with the ability to impress our will upon our environment. Water is associated with the emotional realm, our ability to empathize with others and experience the world with our senses. Fire is associated with the spiritual realm, our ability to derive meaning from our experiences and channel our passion. Air is associated with the intellectual realm, our ability to analyze meaning and memory. These principles come into play even more vividly in the extended style reading, which consists of 9 cards. Draw and arrange them into groups of 3 to paint a more detailed picture, the first pile representing past, the middle the

present, and the last one showing the future tendencies with the energy currently being circulated.

In addition to the individual card meanings and the story they tell about the reader's current situation, the total proportion of elements being represented to one another will yield a potential future outcome.

To find this, after the full reading, sort the cards into piles by element, and then order those piles by quantity from largest to smallest. Use the resulting sequence to look up the correlating visualization in this booklet. Read it, and take a moment to meditate on it if you find it resonates. As with any divination, if the message is not resonating with you, don't try to force it to fit! It might be pertaining to a different area of life that you aren't presently focused on, or even picking up on an energy that is around you rather than your own personal experience. Be at peace, and let curiosity guide you to the truth!



Alpaca

Leadership, Protection,
Companionship



“It helps to have friends in high places”

You may stand out in the crowd, causing potential for ridicule and torment. You may get picked on when the pressure to conform is so strong that you may be rewarded for reinforcing the status quo, and it's hard to encourage your special traits or talents to flourish when they are bringing so much suffering and pain. It's not until that ability gets tested and you pull through for the group in a time of crisis that they will show any appreciation for that thing which formerly set you apart as an outcast. There is also an attitude of cooperation you can cultivate in order to diffuse the situation. Outward friendliness, humility,

willingness to laugh at yourself and your differences can help to turn an awkward social setting around. Hostile feelings come from an assumption that you think you are better than others, perhaps because of your privileged place in a hierarchy.

Acknowledging equality or showing respect for others can help band together dissenting parties. You don't have to self-deprecate or lower your own standards to fit in.

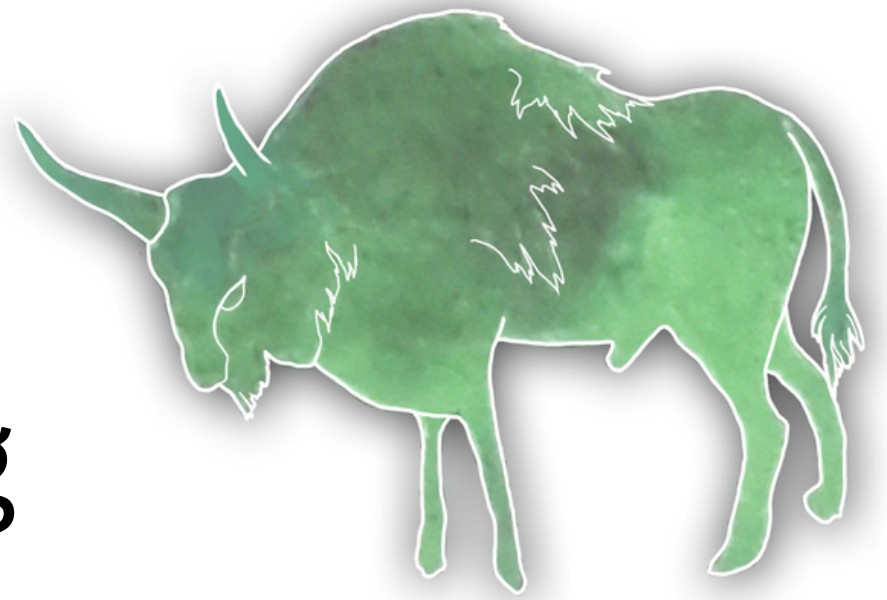
Being authentically friendly is the best way to cultivate real and lasting friendship.

There's no 'I' in team, or 'alpaca'! Many farmers will employ an alpaca in a mixed herd of animals to stand guard. Despite having very limited offensive capabilities in battle, they are very perceptive and use their height advantage to spot potential threats and communicate it to their friends.

Most of the time they have a very sweet demeanor, and get along with everyone even outside of their own species, but in threat situations they become territorial and protective. This is a potent combination for social harmony, instinctual comradery rather than a forced facade can bring out the best in you and those around you.

Auroch

Providence,
Abundance, Nurturing



“Build a longer table not a taller fence”

The primordial provider, found embellished on the earliest cave walls and bred into our primary animal protein source of milk and beef. At many points and places we have had a deeply sacred bond with this creature, putting great effort into its protection and husbandry. Buffalos once covered the plains, hunted sparingly with care and conservation, but now they are a rarity and their ranges have been taken over by domesticated cousins. Besides its host of ecological issues, this trade should be regarded as a symbolic misstep as we sever ourselves further from our connection to nature.

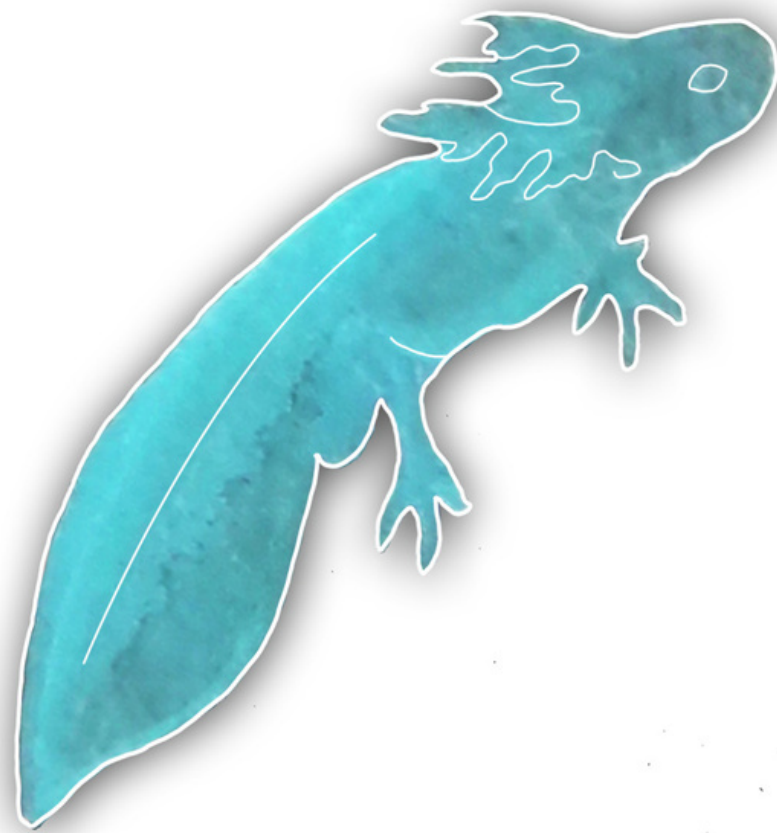
The good earth is rich and can provide for everyone if we maintain the environment. The auroch is a reminder of how quickly life can change. Entire species can go extinct and the landscape permanently altered in a relatively short span of time.

Even the sands of the ocean can come from the silicate bedrock left bare by herds of animals grazing grass. And even more wondrous still, the grains of the deserts were once underwater, perhaps having journeyed all the way from the belly of another herding animal. So always bear in mind the sacred interconnectedness of all things, and seize opportunities when you get them to show generosity and take care of other living things.



Axolotl

Regeneration,
Healing

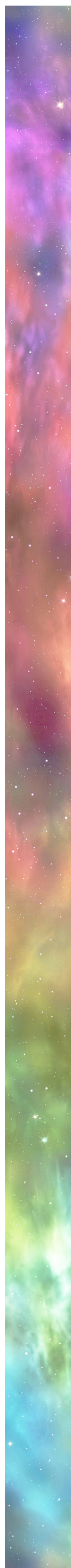


“Laughter is the best medicine”

We have always been really fascinated by animals with regenerative capabilities, eager to harness some of it for ourselves. Salamanders are able to grow back entire severed limbs, which would be a really great trait for us to have. Unfortunately, we humans heal pretty slowly, and can be injured in ways that other creatures don't, including emotionally and mentally. All of these domains interact in psychosomatically complex ways, as if our health care weren't already difficult enough to get a handle on.

But one medicine above all seems to benefit the whole of our body, mind, and spirit, and greatly enhance overall wellbeing. That is of course, laughter!

And that isn't just a cheesy metaphor. The act of laughing triggers chemicals that help us to relax, relieve pain, connect emotionally, and help your blood vessels work better. Similar to exercise, regular hearty laughter can have lasting health benefits. And when you look at this strange little creature, with its happy little expression, it's hard not to smile! Time heals all wounds, but we should make sure we are doing everything else within our power to facilitate our bodily processes. Practice good self-care, think about your organs and systems and try to understand your meat suit at a deeper level. Attending to your wellbeing will help you get the most out of life, and be ready for new challenges that you may face. Don't run yourself into the ground chasing goals and leaving yourself vulnerable to illness and fatigue. Your future self with thank you for taking good care earlier on!



Badger

Loyalty, Sincerity



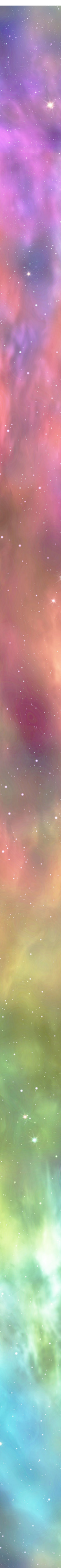
“A friend in need is a friend indeed”

Friendship is rare. Relationships take real work and maintenance, and our current social paradigm is one that preaches self-preservation and only keeping things around which are positive or benefit you immediately, whilst paradoxically putting friendship and comradeship up on a gilded pedestal in media. The power of friendship is portrayed as a driving force for the success of the lead character, with a supporting cast of sidekicks who would take a bullet for them and give up on their own hopes and dreams for the sake of the hero's storyline. The message is seemingly, whatever you do, be the main character. Step on everyone around you to pull yourself up, your own version of reality is the only correct one and your destiny has been set by some divine mandate. You are the chosen one.

Stories have to be formulated this way because we have such short attention spans, but of course, this does not even vaguely resemble how real networks work. We are all fundamentally connected to one another, even if you 'cut someone out' or 'block them' for the convenience of your current narrative, they are still out there in the world. You can't just block everything that doesn't go along with your wishes. The badger is a good reminder to tough it out and stand your ground.

Confrontation is unpleasant, but without picking certain fights and communicating standards there is no way to demonstrate what kind of behavior is acceptable. If you find cowardice to be unacceptable in others, don't engage in it yourself!

Call someone out when they are being a bad friend. Having a heart of gold isn't just about being unconditionally generous, or giving of yourself until you have nothing left for the sake of someone who is perceived to be important. What you can really do to show how much you care is not allow them to engage in destructive behavior against themselves or others. In order to be there for someone, sometimes the one you have to protect them from is the lower version of themselves. Show your loyalty, to who they really are, even if it means losing the poser they've become.



Bat

Trust in the Process,
Attention to Inner
Voice, Commitment



“There's a method to the madness”

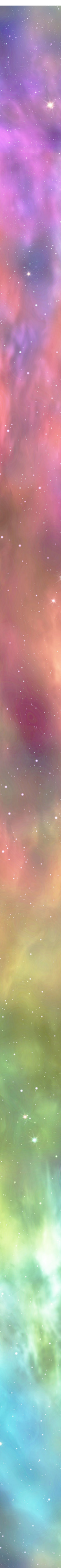
In the pitch blackness, bats navigate with echolocation, bouncing their voices off of the surfaces of their surroundings to determine their place in space. Most of us can't even peacefully navigate our own living space at night, let alone unknown surroundings, and to actually accomplish a task in such conditions is unthinkable. We depend very heavily on our eyesight, and so easily fall victim to appearances.

If you have never attempted to experience the world with impairment to any of your senses, I highly recommend trying to do so, with assistance from a friend. Putting on a blindfold and trying to get through a building really opened my eyes to the significance that the role

of design plays in the way we build.

Overall, it's an invaluable lesson for building empathy toward differing ability levels and very revealing about assumptions you may have about yourself.

Who are you, when you close your eyes? Think about how much trust you have in your own process, what you may be relying too heavily on, and if you would be the same person if you lost it. Your inner truth is what's left when you start peeling surface things away, so mess around with that. If you are having doubts about a direction or decision, call out to it, and see what echoes back. Once you have gained your bearings independent of appearances, commit to it fully and don't let distractions throw you off.



Beaver

Strategy, Design,
Dedication



“Intelligent by design”

In the natural world at a cellular level, both living beings and nonliving structures have components which are self-assembling. A kind of blueprint, matrix, or fractal guides the arrangement of molecules into position, and as the chemical reaction unfolds the form is realized. Our DNA is a schematic, mapping out our whole body, and our cells roll it out like clockwork.

When it comes to imagining a goal or charting a path through life, we need to account for its potential components the same way in order to make sure everything is arranged in the right place as soon as the conditions are met for its shape to unfold. Failure to do any sort of

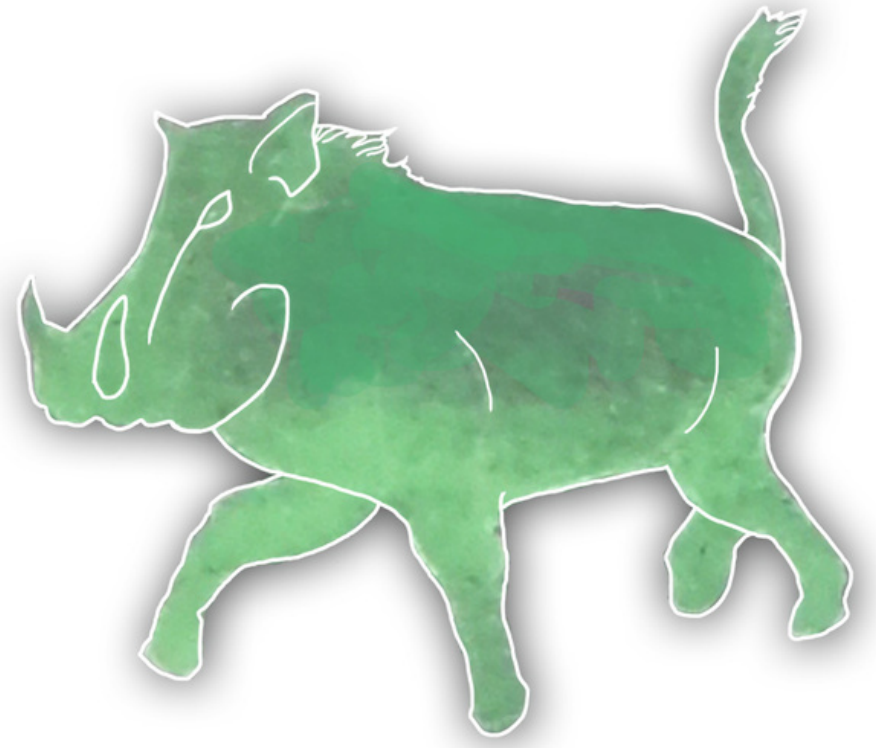
visualization can leave us with a disjointed design or cause entire sections to be omitted completely when the right space hasn't been allocated. They say 'the best laid plans of mice and men do often go astray', but their rodent cousins the beavers have no such impediment with regard to logistics.

Beaver lodges not only provide secure homesteads for their families, but also drastically change the surrounding biosphere and create habitats for other animals. In order to fundamentally change something, you cannot hope to modify it from within. For a large systemic overhaul, the most elegant solution is to create something so radically superior that the only logical conclusion is to shift over to it.

Instead of designing something specifically to go along with everything else, go ahead and plan it exactly as you think it should be and watch the surroundings change instead. Your life is yours to engineer, don't let pressure to fit the mold prevent you from expressing a new form which the world may be sorely in need of and just not know yet.

Boar

Steadfastness,
Resilience

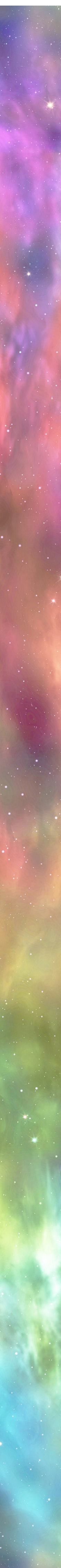


“Bring your pigs to market”

Exposing yourself to something over time, starting with small doses and increasing gradually is the way to build up tolerance. Weight training is the classic example, as damage to the muscles forces the body to rebuild and improve, but you can build up resilience in just about any area. Once you set your mind to it and decide that endurance is the primary goal, building up becomes a fairly straightforward process, but sometimes it's difficult to pinpoint exactly what area to develop in order to have an impact on your overall toughness.

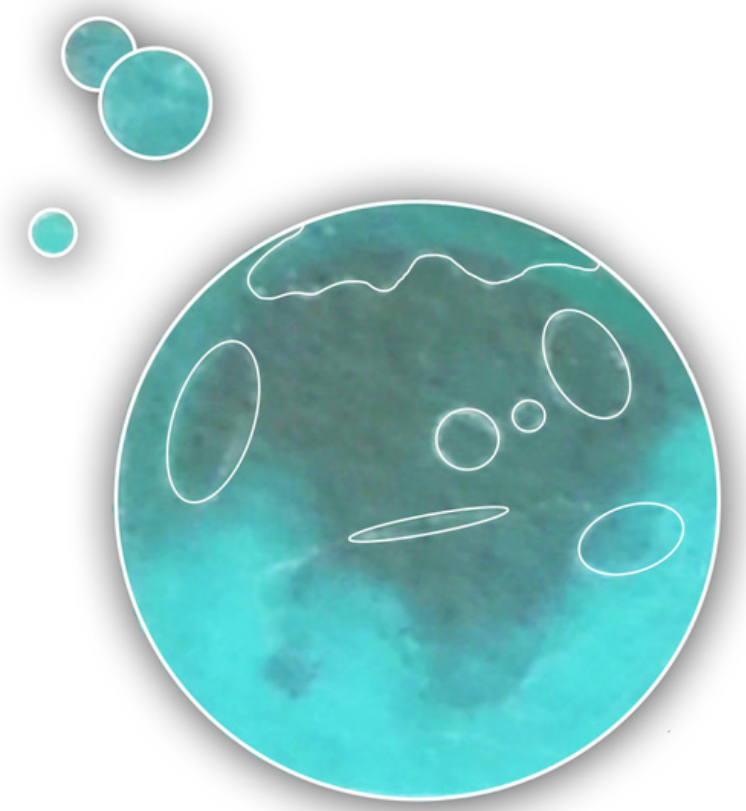
Having a lot of physical stamina, but getting easily exhausted in social settings

might not serve you the best depending on what it is you want to accomplish, so try to build up the correct types of stamina before making a big commitment to a goal. Then once you do set your sights on a finish line put your whole heart into it and don't give up. Even if you have to slow down, as long as you don't surrender and dedicate yourself to making forward progress no matter how small you will get to it eventually! A project might sit on the back burner for years, but if it's important to you, carve out some time even if you have to dedicate the majority of your attention to other things. Maybe it's a hobby or side hustle, like a savings account as long as you keep tossing some coins in it will be worth something tangible someday. When you cash in it will be that much sweeter because you stuck it out!



Bubble

Ideals,
Impermanence



“Don’t let it burst your bubble”

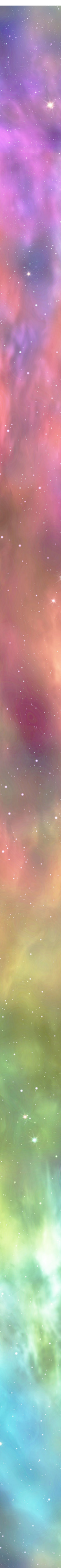
Delight in the small joys of life, from the particularly spectacular sunsets, to the cute fuzzy animals that dart across your path. All the little things that conspire to make your day better are precious gifts, no matter how bad of a mood you find yourself in, let positive disturbances command your attention at least as much as negative ones would. Don’t let inconveniences steal the spotlight disproportionately, because if given the chance they could skew your whole worldview.

It’s not all bad, so if you need to put on some rose tinted glasses and get a little hopelessly romantic to see that, do it. It’s certainly preferable to the opposite.

While a depressed mindset has been shown to give us a more realistic perception of very specific parts of reality, such as quantities of objects, there is a time and a place for that mode and prolonging it can cause permanent damage.

Glamorizing cynicism as more adult or practical is both dangerous and inaccurate. If you automatically associate having hopes and dreams with being childish, stage an intervention for yourself and find a way to inject some joy, because that's no way to live. Once a person has achieved a skill or profession, and some sort of basis in the adult world, the next goal should be to go back and rediscover the inner child who was left behind.

Reconnection with your dreams ensures you will have a life that is meaningful and fulfilling, not just materially adequate, because physical achievements can be taken away in an instant. Immaturity is to not be able to navigate responsibility at all, true wisdom is to balance both dependability and meaning for an authentically fulfilling life.



Butterfly

Joy, Delight,
Miracle

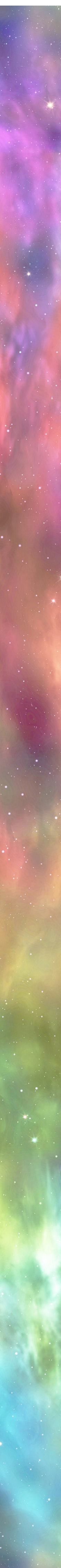


“A thing of beauty is a joy forever”

Because of its lifecycle, transforming through several stages and at one point breaking its body apart to become something totally different, the butterfly is commonly associated with metamorphosis and change. It lives for only a brief time in its final spectacular form, but the vibrant colors and patterns make this creature particularly memorable and precious to us. We represent it widely in our art and motifs, and its ephemeral beauty fills our imaginations with wonder.

Why would it be necessary for a life form to go to such extremes, just to achieve the continuation which other species accomplish with substantially less

drama? The fact that life can take such an incredible range of approaches in tackling the same basic challenge, present itself in forms so specialized and elaborate is truly miraculous. They are so fragile and dependent on the network of their environment, but really, so is all of life. Butterflies are a particularly stark example and a warning as they become endangered; the idea that such beauty could be lost forever should be of immense concern. It would be easy to argue that specialized animals in some way 'have it coming' by not being more suited to an increasingly unlivable environment, but how long will it be till we are the next ones up on that list? Things are beautiful because you love them, so stand in defense of what you love and don't deny the existence of miracles just to look practical or tough. You run the risk of losing everything which is truly precious, and the concessions you made to justify that might have put you in a precarious position with no warning signs left to help you realize how much danger you are in.



Camel

Endurance,
Steadfastness



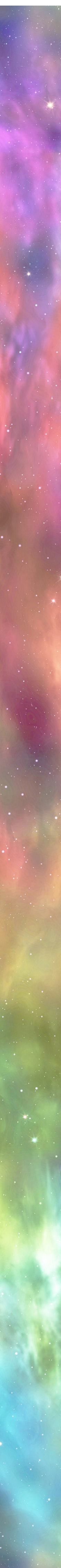
*“A journey of a thousand miles begins
with a single step”*

Just when you think you have had all that you can take, the last straw threatens to break you. Hold fast. Draw from your reserves, you saved up for this and might find pockets of strength inside yourself if you look. If you come up short this time, take note of what you needed and plan your provisions accordingly in the future. This life is a journey, not a sprint!

Dig in and commit, even if it seems like such a long way to go. If you get started you will have conquered the hardest part.

Just as life's little troubles and inconveniences chip away at you and over time can push you to your breaking

point, you can dish it right back out with your personal progress. As the desert throws everything it can at you, luring you with the false hope of an oasis or battering you with sandstorms, just keep moving forward, even a little at a time. As long as you don't lose your way, and keep moving forward, your endurance will pay off in the end.



Capybara

Confidence,
Freedom from Fear



“Fake it till you make it”

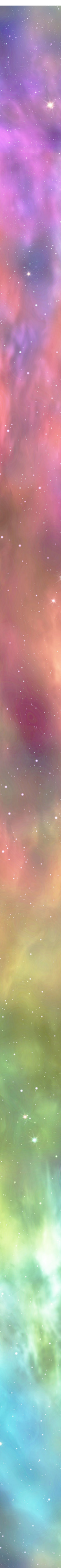
Fear is the mind killer. We are biologically beholden to the effects of it, but we can break that down by gradual exposure to the things we are most afraid of. If we have nothing to fear but fear itself, the best policy is to take it on as often as possible and try to check everything off our list of potential triggers in order to be as free as possible.

But sometimes this cannot be done, because our mind creates such abstract and irrational anxieties, such as imposter syndrome. It's possible to be more afraid of success than failure. Our mind is both our greatest asset and worst enemy. So, we have a couple options: either we can avoid situations that might set us off,

including holding ourselves back from potentially gratifying endeavors, because we might then be expected to keep performing at that level and we are afraid of falling short; or, we can become divested from the outcome completely and live in the moment.

Finding enjoyment in the process itself is a really great way to avoid anxiety over future possibilities, without sacrificing possible positive outcomes by failing to participate in our own lives. Taking a 'come what may' attitude, and being as involved as possible in the sensations of the current experience can spare us from discomforts past and future.

Now is all we have control over, so that's where our attention should be intently focused. In the wild, capybaras are a perplexing creature. They get along with everything, and have a uniquely carefree demeanor, even around caimans who by rights should be chewing on them instead of hanging out. Not everything is automatically out to get you; even enemies can potentially become friends. Confidence that everything will work out for our highest good, and releasing the need to have all the answers will ultimately grant us freedom from fear.



Caribou

Stamina,
Self Esteem



“Keeping body and soul together”

One of the greatest land migrations on the planet belongs to the caribou. They travel over a thousand miles each year to take advantage of summer grazing in northern regions before the snow falls. It seems like a lot of trouble to go to just for grass, but this cycle has enabled them to amass large herds and enjoy relative safety in numbers and places others would rather not be. Sometimes it's worth putting in the extra effort to exploit a resource which would otherwise go untapped, and nature always finds a way to make use of what is offered. When you are equipped for travel it can actually be enjoyable, but when you are ill prepared it seems impossible. In the

journey of life, make sure you are taking steps to improve your stamina, whether that's mentally by not relying constantly on conveniences and training yourself to enjoy your own process, or physically conditioning to withstand longer bouts of discomfort.

If you align too closely with the conditions you start out in, you can't expect to be able to venture much farther. If you were unhappy early in life, during school years or what have you, realize that it might take some intensive preparation to be able to relocate to greener pastures. But doing so will keep you from fighting over resources with everyone else who started out where you did, and it pays to be ready for anything either way! If you keep telling yourself that you aren't ready, you never will be. Take proactive steps.



Cat

Curiosity, Confidence,
Assistance



“Curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back!”

Great discoveries are often made by accident, or in pursuit of something seemingly unrelated. While it’s not good to stick your nose in other people’s business, if you have a hunch that that something smells fishy sometimes it’s good to follow your instinct and track down the truth. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

If you are in a position of security and self-confidence, putting yourself out there to take some risks can reap unexpected rewards. It may seem like the safe road to keep it to yourself when you see something out of place, or say it’s none of your concern, but preserving

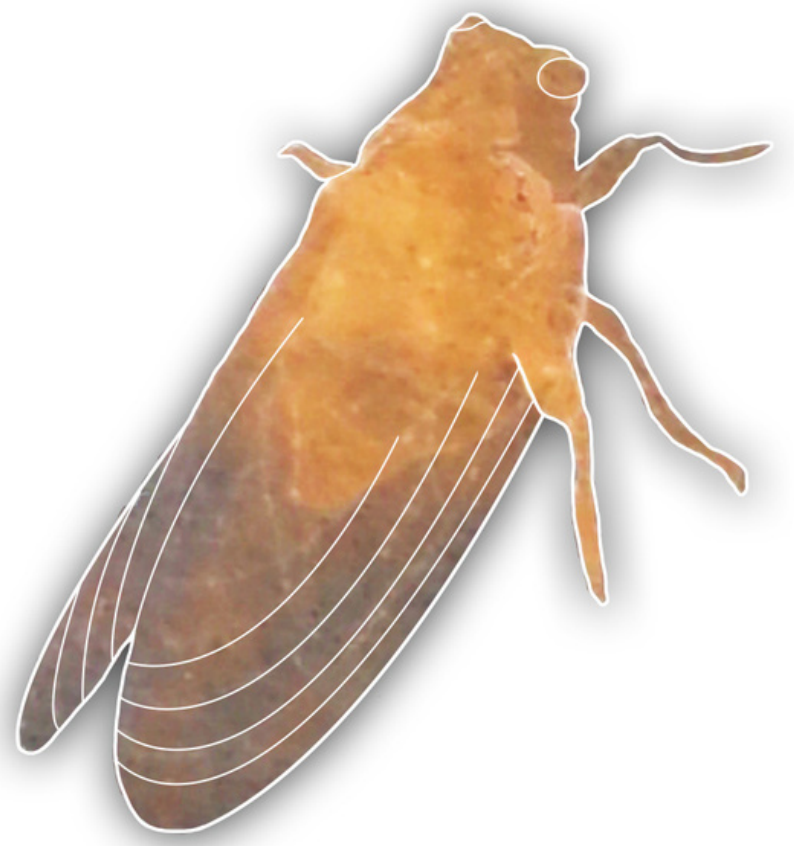
your own interests could allow someone else to be put into harm's way instead. Trust in your own ability to realize when it's your time to shine, when standing up could make all the difference in a situation, because it isn't just bad people doing bad things that propagate evil in the world. It's all the good people that stand idly by and say nothing, or don't act on their curiosities when they see the potential to solve a problem.

Life is full of puzzles, not all of them will get completed, but you might be the one to discover the missing piece to someone else's, should you find yourself in the right place at the right time. You might dismiss your passion for a hobby thinking it would be selfish to pursue it, but you never know where the next great cure or technology might come from. After all, penicillin came from a contaminated petri dish; your happy little accident may be just what the world needs.



Cicada

Music, Artistic
Expression



“Music to your ears”

Some people might find the droning of cicadas in the summer time to be really annoying, but personally it’s something I look forward to. Whatever your music tastes, make sure you are setting aside time to really get into it. It might not be everyone’s jam, but if it’s yours, make sure you are getting to enjoy it to the fullest, whether it’s live shows or cranking it while you work out.

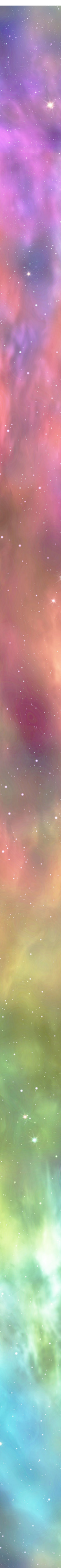
If there are people in your life constantly telling you to turn it down and compromise with something that doesn’t jive, reconsider their priority to you.

Difference of taste is one thing, but actively preventing you from pursuing one of the most important things in the human experience is not acceptable. If

they aren't vibing at your frequency,
that's ok! Find someone who does.

Cicadas call out with their heart song to
attract love, and subject everyone else to
their cacophony.

Even if it isn't your cup of tea, you have
to admit it's a little bit endearing how
shamelessly they express their feelings,
and the same is true for us, if someone
bothered to write and perform a song, a
lot of work went in. People don't put
forth that kind of effort based on nothing
at all. Even the most sell out artists have
something to say now and again. Put up
with it for a while, let it run its course,
another track will be along shortly to take
its place, but don't give up on what lights
you up for the sake of popular opinion all
of the time.



Coatl

Unity, Cycle of Life,
Constancy of Change



“Different strokes for different folks”

There is no perfect, static state. Everything in the universe is in a constant state of flux. Every single cell in our body is going through cycles of growth, death, and replacement. We can live several lives within just this one span if we like. Because of this, change is not the only constant, but also choice. We are constantly reinventing ourselves, and need to reinforce our identity each moment with our choices.

Evil cannot reign forever because everything someday dies, and that should be a comforting thought rather than a scary one. It's the only way to have a level playing field, and true freedom, but it may be a badly represented concept in

most of our art and literature. Good and evil are not polar opposites, they are exclusively human constructs and even their definitions and value vary widely between different ages and cultures. So the better opposites to refer to which the universe keeps in balance are unity and entropy.

Chaos, not evil, is the dark unknown; it isn't inherently malevolent, it's just the natural phenomenon by which things drift apart, degrade, and decay. This process is needed in order for new life to be possible. Without it, nothing would move or be alive. But we as humans have an added dimension of choice to be cruel toward one another. It's said that evil cannot be fully extinguished in the human heart but clearly that isn't the case. If our values change, the standards will change, and we can change the parameters of what constitutes malevolence. Our greatest travesties are learned, so as a snake sheds its skin, we can shed our destructive institutions of war, slavery, and injustice.



Coelacanth

Evidence, Pursuit of
Truth, Proof

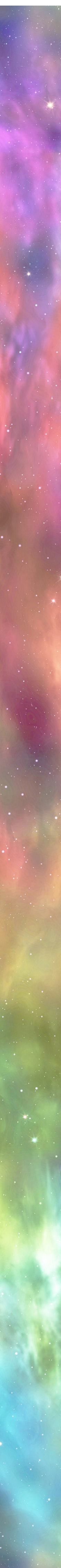


“Cream rises to the top”

When new evidence presents itself, the story needs to update to include those findings. We need to take special care against anything which inhibits the pursuit of absolute truth, including narratives which are so vested in their own self-interest that they perceive updates as threatening and try to stifle them. That includes our own beliefs about ourselves and our capabilities. It's crucial to be honest and realistic in both directions about what we can actually do.

Negative self-talk without any actual basis or anticipation of failure at something you haven't tried is just bad science. If you are worried you might be ill prepared, try to work your way up to it, but don't assume anything is not available to you without giving it the old college try.

If you haven't done something in a long time it doesn't necessarily mean that you never can again. When coelacanth specimens were discovered after it was thought to have been extinct, due to disappearance from the fossil record, there was an optimistic uproar that anything was possible and science could overcome anything. There is definitely something romantic about the idea of ancient species resurfacing, and that's an apt metaphor for your own ability to reinvent yourself and revisit old interests and goals. Maybe you gave up on something because you weren't seeing very compelling results. Bear in mind, the seeds you plant of positive change may take a long time to sprout, but once they do you will probably have forgotten all the steps you had to take to get the fruit to bear that you are now enjoying. Human memory is fickle like that, so if you are working hard now to be more disciplined and apply yourself, don't get discouraged just because you aren't seeing many gains. Likewise, if something good is happening, don't assume that you didn't do anything to deserve it. Follow the evidence, and where possible, do some journaling and take notes about what changes you are making so that you can refer back to it later and make the correct correlations between cause and effect.



Conch

Declaration, Intention,
Communication



“The world is your oyster”

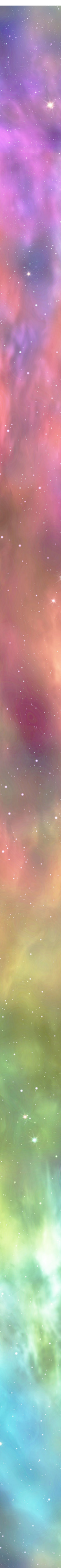
Who are you? What do you want? And what are you willing to do for it? The conch is in your hands, as you speak your truth in a declaration of your sincerest wishes and desires. The whole world lends an ear when you enter a mode of communication which is authentic and true.

With the right tools, your sound can be amplified and reach farther, but you will still need to reach deep and fill up your lungs to let out a powerful blast! Take the time to sort out your story, and then sing it from the mountaintops with clarity and resolve. Make a declaration you can't back down from, and put forward the best possible version of yourself. One trick for doing this is to 'burn the ships',

or remove escape routes for yourself to back down from things that are important to you. Of course, exercise caution and don't do anything rash over just a passing fancy or flavor of the week. But if there is something that keeps coming up in your life as a source of inspiration and joy that you just can't justify pulling the trigger on, try investing in it.

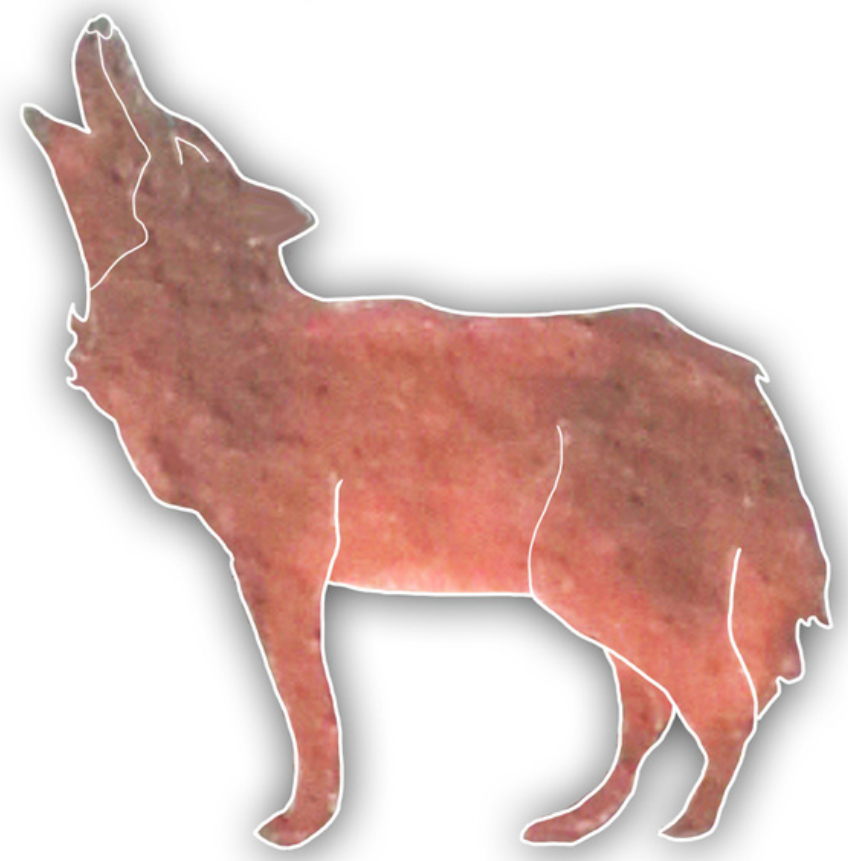
Write down your goals, buy yourself either tools, an outfit you would wear while doing it, or some other tangible symbol of investment in the activity. This will help to pressure you to actually put the time in, feeling the need to get the value out of what you spent and shaping the way you see yourself as someone who does this particular thing.

Nobody can speak for you. You are the one who knows yourself best. You have something important to say, and everyone will be given a turn to do so. Will you clam up when the conch comes around to you, or will you come out of your shell?



Coyote

Moral Fable, Teacher,
Balance



“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”

The trickster archetype often takes a shapeshifting or inhuman form in order to be able to demonstrate points of, ‘hey don’t do this, I can do it because I’m not real and I wanted to impress upon you exactly how dead you will be if you try it!’

and the classic comical example is the cartoon of the coyote and roadrunner. He dashes off the cliff edge, so sure his quarry is within grasp, and neglects to see that his feet left the ground a long

time ago. There is a long pause of realization before falling to his doom in a tiny puff of smoke a million miles below.

We watch these time and time again, knowing well what the outcome will be, but it isn’t because he is the hero of the story that endears him to us, it is his role

as a teacher. He is change and adaptation itself. He tells us that there are no shortcuts to success, that there is no magic crate we can order which will give us the handy gadget to reach our goal. It's not that he is stupid; quite the contrary, he studies and schemes and designs very elaborate solutions, but it is in that laser focus that he loses sight of the greater moral of the story which we the viewer are then at privilege to witness in his failure.

The real life totem of the coyote is the exact opposite, adapted to symbiotic life in a huge range of environments including right there alongside humans where many other creatures have failed to. And the domesticated version has shape shifted into hundreds of variants of dog that live in our homes and hearts, and manage to teach us lessons every single day. Who's to say these evolutions weren't an intentional strategy to preserve their survival? Are they innocent, or ingenious?



Crane

Triumph, Grace



“Keep your feathers oiled”

While it’s very satisfying to climb up to the top of the mountain, it is technically possible to fly over the summit entirely.

It’s not less of a feat if you go by a different route. Everyone’s victory condition is different. There are some widely agreed upon markers of success, but life isn’t merely about picking one of those off of a list and grinding away till you achieve it.

Triumph is soaring above what was even thought to be possible, not just doing something really hard. Absolute victory is usually a mix of both, and while it’s important to work hard and apply yourself to a pursuit which takes time and dedication, heroism carries with it a call for a vision above and beyond even that.

Only in your heart can you find the greater calling, the reason for doing the thing which is both regarded as heroic to attain by society's standards but also meaningful by your own. If you stay true to your inner compass, and shoot for the moon even when others are trying to convince you it isn't possible, you can achieve incredible heights!

Well-meaning friends might encourage you and urge you on to a point, but they may question you when they perceive you as holding yourself to a standard higher than the conventional goal post. Learn to let the criticism slide right off.

It's easy to dismiss the haters, but sometimes it's difficult not to be led off your path by people who seem to want what's best.

You know what's best for you. Don't settle for less, even if it's still more than most would do. The sky's the limit, not the prevailing belief.



Crocodile

Primal Strength,
Rhythm, Timing



“See you later, alligator!”

Being in a state of flow is having a sense that you are in the right place at the right time. The more you pursue it, the more you expand that window of opportunity, and in essence claim that territory as part of your domain. You terraform what was once barren turf of everyday monotony into a fertile and abundant plain in which to sow the seeds of your new ideas and serendipitous occasions. You are able to intentionally direct the course of energy, instead of being blindsided by it and tripping over obstacles like a Lego minefield in the dark.

In order to dance through life instead of stumble, strive to listen for the music so you can fall into step. The universe is

made of patterns and vibrations, so tune in to these cycles unfolding all around you instead of letting artificial regiment of the daily grind comprise the boundaries of your awareness. Give yourself room to warm up, build up momentum, and transition gracefully into higher impact activities. Instead of something to simply get out of the way, let your self-care become integral to the rhythm of your day. Treat everything as an opportunity for synergistic combinations. In this way, you will feel like time is on your side rather than running from the ticking clock which hounds you that you are wasting life away.

When you start to see the patterns and have mastery of the rules, you can interrupt the trajectory to break them. Introducing a shock to the established loop can alter it permanently, but take care to harmonize with it first to discover exactly where that change should be made to achieve the outcome you want. Or, if a pattern is negative enough that any other way would be better, such as the inertia of sedentary lifestyle or inactivity, find something that will shake it up entirely to get a new set to play with.



Crystal

Refinement, Resolution
of Pressure, Treasure



“A diamond in the rough”

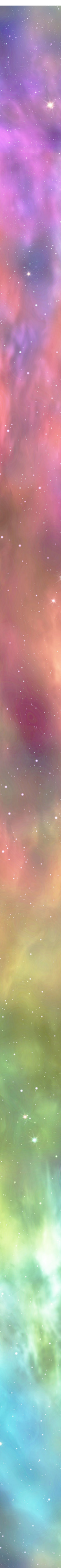
When you already have the fundamentals of design in place, it's safe to go that extra mile. Just that little bit more polish, that above and beyond detail, the icing on the cake. When done in excess or to cover up a composition that is flawed at its core, it will come off as disingenuous and gaudy. But when used tastefully, and not to excess, a little sparkle can really go the distance in leaving a lasting impression and a truly memorable experience.

The same is true of character. When someone has their bases covered, and then takes the time to sprinkle on a little panache, their presence seems to just glow! If it's all flash and no substance, they will come off as a cheap imitation of

something else, a rhinestone instead of a rock.

Real diamonds take ages of heat and pressure to be formed into their perfect crystalline arrangement; you can't rush this process or take shortcuts.

The crystal symbolizes harmony, completion, and authenticity. Deep inside at an atomic level, the bonds themselves take beautiful geometric forms, and this inner artistry radiates outward to create its unique qualities. The real thing is something to be treasured, remember that even as you experience demands and discomfort from your environment these experiences are shaping you, and can help you cultivate inner strength and beauty. What's visible from the outside doesn't matter; a diamond that hasn't been unearthed yet is still exquisite even though nobody has discovered it yet!



Dolphin

Philanthropy, Wealth
of Knowledge



“Give a man a fish he eats for a day”

Knowledge is the gift that keeps on giving.

Not only is teaching the most effective way to learn something yourself, but the

wealth that you pass on will pay back dividends as people from different walks of life apply information in different ways and make discoveries which in turn could

benefit all of us. Especially when it's something you are spending time on anyway, taking some time to log or document it and making that available to

others is the best way to get the most leverage out of it. You never know how

sharing an interest or hobby might enhance your own enjoyment out of it, help you connect with people of similar inclinations, and potentially inspire you to take it to the next level.

Often times with mastery of a skill there is a pressure to keep the trade secrets safe, or that your exclusivity on it preserves the value or makes you more desirable for hire. But if you are really that great at it your particular level will always retain its worth, and increasing spread and demand for it will only provide you with more opportunities to exercise that craft.

Trying to implement artificial scarcity in a market doesn't necessarily drive demand, and if the inflation of value is truly fraudulent or contrived people will catch onto that and grow resentful. If you are marketing yourself exclusively under the guise of, 'I'm the only one who can do this! You need me!' it definitely comes across as predatory. Much better to adopt a sales pitch that emphasizes they have many options out there but your way just happens to have a special something to it. This is true of all interpersonal situations, authentic generosity rather than duress is the way to operate. Trying to keep people beholden or dependent on you isn't healthy, so empower them to appreciate you as a person rather than just desiring of what you provide. If you position yourself as a commodity, they may be one day saying 'So long, and thanks for all the fish!'

Dragonfly

Change, Emotional
Maturity



“Times change and we with time”

The majority of insects evolved after the advent of flowering plants, but the dragonfly is the most ancient having bridged the gap between water and land with its metamorphic life cycle. At one point they were huge, up to two feet long. They were the stuff of nightmares, but now they are pretty little glass-winged works of art.

Their dimensions have changed with time, but the basic equation for their success has not. They show us how to retain the core essence of what you are through different ages and elements. Versatile and independent, they command both the depth of feelings in their infant form and the skies of thought as adults but keep their identity as fearsome hunters through both stages.

They inspire us with their complex flight, and our engineers struggle to design robots as elegant and effective as what is essentially one of nature's very first prototypes.

Cultivating emotional maturity empowers you to cope with change gracefully, and get the most out of potential upgrades.

The dragonfly spends a long time honing it's abilities as larva and carries those with it into adulthood. It doesn't disparage its younger self just because it grows wings.

Taking time to rediscover and honor your inner child in a way allows them to survive, if you neglect who you used to be their life

essentially ends. All the fears you had about death as a youth become realized if you let your imagination and childhood dreams die for the sake of appearances as

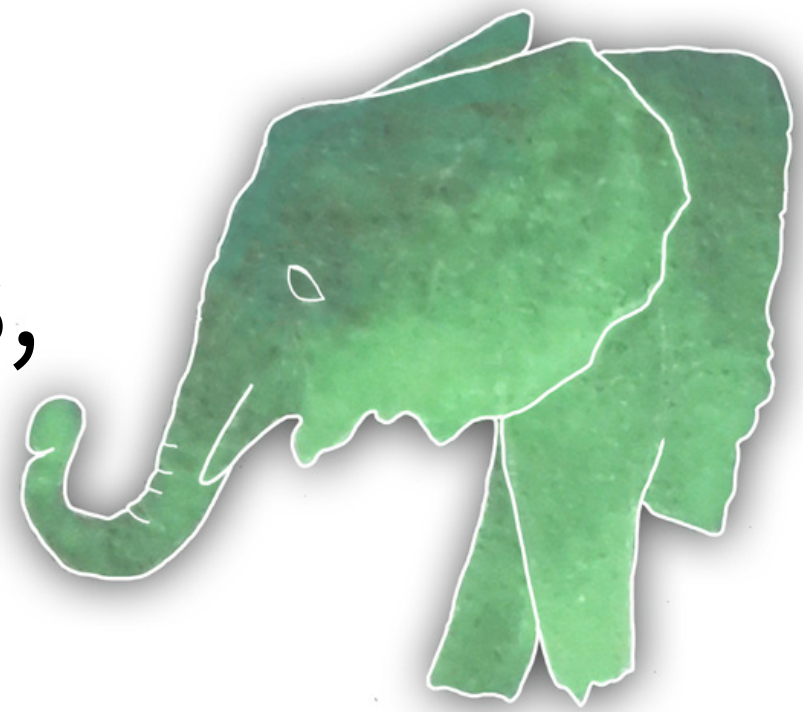
an adult. Focusing on reproduction or trying to build a certain persona doesn't make you mature. Maturity is realizing that

your younger self had dreams worth chasing, and that your job getting older is just to become more effective in doing

that, not just give up on them to go chase someone else's.

Elephant

Overcoming Obstacles,
Application of
Knowledge, Memory



“Don’t make a mountain out of a molehill”

Our brains are like muscles, which can be trained and developed. Investing in neural pathways which serve us well in life, and reinforcing memories we want to hold on to will actually make those connections stronger. It’s difficult to realize the need to consciously do this, as so much of our attention is hijacked, and memory banks cluttered up with ads and information that is truly irrelevant to a quality life. It would be nice to be able to just dump what we don’t use anymore! Unused synapses will weaken with time involuntarily, but we do have control over the strength of the thoughts we currently hold in focus.

Putting thought to paper and throwing lead about it goes a long way in giving shape and form to them and making it easier to call them up at will. Speaking about it even more so, we have abandoned a lot of our oral tradition in this technologically advanced age where it's easier just to conjure the facts as needed from a database rather than committing them to memory.

But there is magic in actually reciting words. Talking it out with someone might make the solution quite obvious once said out loud. When you are faced with a mammoth task, employ diagrams or writing to break it down into manageable pieces. Use all the tools at your disposal, and leave a trail of landmarks in your mind to more easily find your way back. Elephants are able to navigate incredible distances with precision, while also having high overall intelligence they seem to have a special affinity for space. Spatial awareness and memory are intimately related and ancient methodologies for memorizing long speeches and poems use visualizations of buildings or rooms.



Emu

Excellence, Hard
Work, Quality



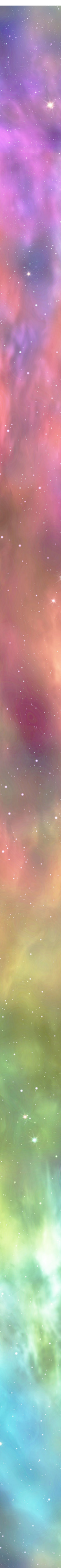
“Nothing comes from nothing”

Build it up, make it work, keep turning it out. Work has become really demonized here in late stage capitalism as something dull, exploitive, and insidious. It's the obligatory nature of it, not having agency or choice in the debts and bills we need to pay can make debt slaves of us, so there is a lot of allure and romance attributed to bygone eras or 'simpler times'. The fact remains, though, the majority of life requires some repetitive action. What varies in these perceptions is the attachment of meaning and value to the activities, or the feeling that we **HAVE** to do something rather than choosing to do it of our own free will.

If you enjoy what you are doing, you'll never have to work a day in your life, or so it goes. When you align yourself to enjoy the task itself, regardless of the desired outcome or any notions of meaning ascribed, you are liberated to pursue bliss in the moment and really follow a task to its highest form.

Slapping some all-in-one on a rental you are trying to flip, and putting the final touches on a masterpiece require the same motion of paint on a brush sweeping over and over... but the feeling is much different.

When your heart isn't in a job, you resent it, you cut corners, you provide bad service and it affects everyone else along the chain. So it's your responsibility to either get out of a situation if it's really that dismal so someone more suited can take your place, or adjust your attitude to reflect that this is something you are spending time doing and therefore is worth doing well.



Feather

Unconditional Love,
Discernment



“The wind beneath your wings”

On the scales of judgment, could your heart be weighed against a feather? In order to figure out what is weighing you down, look at your attachments and bonds and see which ones have extra strings attached. If there are connections in your life which are conditional on certain circumstances, or don't come from a place of genuine love or trust, consider fazing them out. Not every relationship is going to be easy going and care free, but if it feels more like a heavy burden than a blessing, then it may be time to take the lesson from it and move on.

True love is unconditional at its core, which means there are going to be some times which require extra work or attention and that shouldn't be a dissuasion from the connection, just because things are hard. But it shouldn't be like that all the time. If it's a constant battle, much as our contemporary narrative would like to dub that as romantic or endearing, that's really not healthy for either of you in the long run

.

If you can't picture the both of you being old together, at the end of life, feeling light-hearted, with nothing else to gain from each other and still valuing their companionship... some reevaluation is needed. The scales are a tool of discernment, and it's up to you to determine the valence of a relationship. Make sure, when it comes down to it, they are lifting you up.

Fern

Humility, Sincerity



“Down to earth”

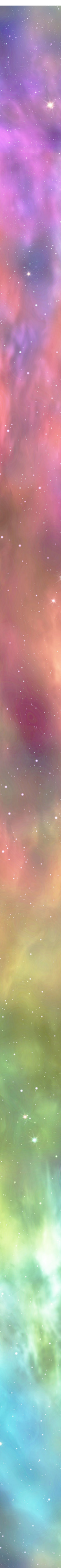
To be humble doesn't mean to be low, it means recognizing that we are all made of the same dirt. Keeping your feet on the ground is about context, and bearing in mind that while we as humans can elevate the values of things by our own definitions, in the grand scheme of things we share a common heritage with all of creation. This inherent equality reminds us both not to artificially inflate our value, nor think less of anything.

There simply isn't any need to put anything up on a pedestal because reality doesn't reflect that being the case. In times of destruction or decay, things that had to be kept pristine to retain their preciousness become muddied all the same, and we then think of them as ruined.

As everything is in a constant state of transmutation and change, nothing can be truly devalued; its parts will be incorporated into something else.

So be mindful of the potential of everything to take on very different forms from its current one under different conditions, yourself included, and realize that the perfect situation is not always attainable and even if so it's not permanent.

The root of humble comes from the same word as earth, so strive to always represent yourself as an earthling and regard other forms of life around you as the same. Looking automatically for what you have in common, rather than allowing shiny things to always catch your eye will serve you much better for finding what you need rather than just what appears desirable. You can't fall when you are already standing firm! A solid foundation gives you so much structure to branch out from.



Firefly

Illumination,
Inner Spirit



“A light at the end of the tunnel”

They say that no one is a light unto themselves... But that may well be because they are looking in all the wrong places. Scores of creatures illuminate themselves from within, and have complex communication systems made entirely of light. Dancing in the dark, lightning bugs stage elaborate displays, once thought to be solely for courtship, taking a step back and looking at the larger picture has allowed us to observe incredible glowing choruses.

A greater story unfolds, in a mysterious rhythm that millions of points of light sync up to. While darkness may confuse and obscure many things, it reveals these tiny chemical reactions being conducted like an orchestra.

Fireflies light the sky on fire with their passionate display, thought to be used for the location of a mate this ritual goes well and above the individual pursuit of companionship. It calls out en masse to the very spirit of love itself in a brilliant celebration! Many other incredible bioluminescent phenomena take place, from deep in the ocean to caverns and caves. What else might we be able to see, if we were to face our fear of the dark and look? Let your inner spirit shine, and don't ever let anyone dim it.



FOX

Friendliness,
Gratitude, Respect



“Bright eyed and bushy tailed”

Though usually credited for its guile and cunning, the true magic of the fox spirit is in its enervating presence. Those blessed with its glammers know how to light up a room, and put a smile onto anyone’s face.

Even when slighted or insulted, they choose to return kindness and humility, knowing the other is facing many hard battles of their own. They can take an underhanded comment and spin it right back as a compliment to the surprise and amusement of everyone around. The ability to recognize and be grateful for your blessings in turn causes them to multiply.

Serendipity can be found in any circumstance, and the whole world seems to be filled with wonder and opportunity. Wherever one vole gets away, another is just ahead in a tuft of grass.

Every failed pounce is shrugged off and wound up again, bouncing along through life with ease and even the most boring task can become a playful game! Smile with your eyes, and pass along well wishes even among envy and greed. Blessings always pay their own way forward when respect is freely given.



Frog

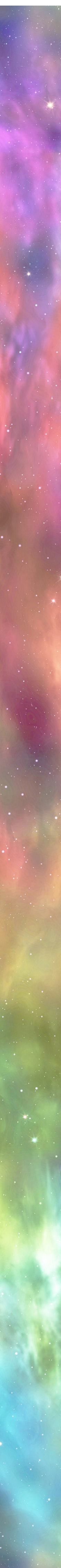
Releasing Toxicity,
Letting go of the Past,
Personal Evolution



“Water under the bridge”

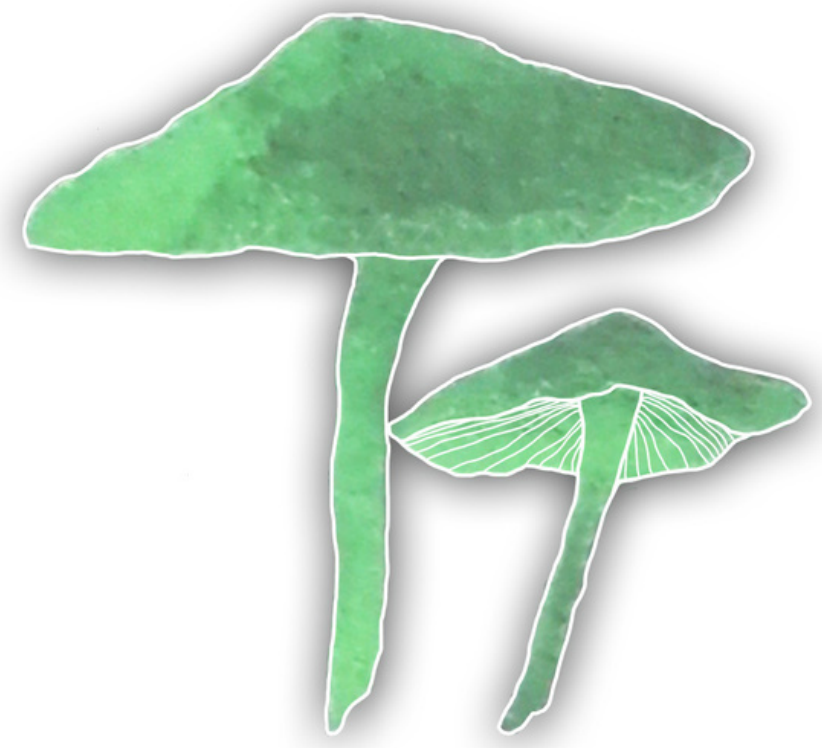
Forgiveness isn't about being ok with the behavior of someone who has wronged you, but accepting that it was something that happened and move on. Holding that negativity close to you is like a poison wearing you down over time, but releasing it has nothing to do with the other person or circumstance and everything to do with your ability to forgive yourself. It sounds a little off when you spell it out in this way, but when it comes down to it most of the time an incident isn't necessarily traumatic on its own. It's the association it may then have with a narrative you have created, or the cumulative effect it is now having with similar instances and formation of a pattern. It's not that, 'this negative thing happened', it becomes, 'why does this always happen to me?' So the one you really need to

forgive is yourself, and take accountability for attracting similar problems, because once you recognize your own behavior which may be contributing, you now have full control in preventing it in the future. You may need to not only let go of past events, but let go of the story you have told yourself about what you really want, which is incompatible with the inputs you are pursuing. If what you really want is true love, for example, but find yourself compromising on the values you really need in a partner to make that happen hoping they will someday change, realize it's your willingness to compromise that is sabotaging your true wishes and not the suitors themselves. They might suck all on their own, that's why forgiveness isn't about condoning them and they probably have a lot of their own personal work to do, but don't blame yourself for trying to have a human connection to them. It's natural for you to want that, and it's reasonable for you to need the things you really do from a potential partner, so forgive yourself for taking chances at it. Accept that things didn't work, recognize when things are not in line with your values, and take that lesson forward into the future.



Fungus

Connection,
Suchness



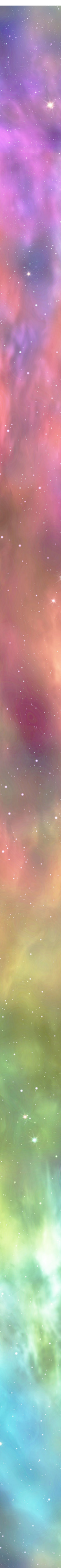
“As above, so below”

It's nothing short of hilarious that the largest living organism on the planet is mostly invisible. Of all the giants that have walked the earth and swam the seas, from hulking dinosaurs to goliath whales, they all dwarf in comparison to a millennia old mushroom. Its complex branching structure covers thousands of acres underground, and seasonal blooms are all that betray its gargantuan presence. Not only are fungi a peculiar life form on their own, but we are gaining a greater understanding of their symbiotic relationship with forests, and the subterranean communication system they provide for trees. The interconnectedness of all things is mysterious and wonderful! The common analogy for the abstract notion of suchness is a cloth stitched with embroidery. This fabric of reality as it were has two sides, though we only see the intentional design on the front, the threads carry over onto the backside we can't see.

The strand is continuous; you wouldn't be able to have all the loops and flourishes if it were all chopped up, so this is a very apt visual explaining the unseen world.

Just because we have limited awareness and our organs of perception are only tuned to say, certain wavelengths of light or decibels of sound, there are sensations happening at all kinds of other levels outside of our range. We can create tools to sense phenomena we don't have organs for, such as radiation, magnetism, or microscopic worlds, but there will always be further mysteries of the universe outside our reach.

We don't need to be able to flip over the cloth to know the thread continues on the other side, we can simply accept that there is a connectedness which holds its form in place. And as far as we are able with our own faculties, we can hone our own feeling of suchness, the sensation that 'you are that!' We have already uncovered that galaxies behave in a similar fashion to the insides of atoms. The laws of physics which rule the immense also rule the small and the macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm. Try to feel that, acknowledge all of the invisible forces acting upon you, and be at peace with your place in creation.



Goat

Selflessness,
Guidance



“I’ve been to the mountaintop”

The purpose of ascension isn’t to just get to some lofty peak in order to look down on everyone else. As you go through your journey and learn valuable lessons, take opportunities to descend back among those who could benefit from hearing your conclusions. If they call you crazy, you might just be ahead of your time, and there are countless examples throughout history of those who made personal sacrifices to deliver messages which wouldn’t be heard until after they were gone. If nobody ever takes it upon themselves to do this, we doom ourselves to being armed with only the understanding of the current era and being ill equipped for looming challenges.

Since people can't be sent back from the future, we are going to need to trust the brave individuals who come forward with suggestions which sound like they very well could be. It takes courage to admit when you are wrong, and move to correct a trajectory which is headed for ruin, but we need to open our eyes to our methods which aren't working. A lot of people have died trying to warn us about our self-destruction; it would be deeply disrespectful not to even consider their points of view.

From the top of the mountain, goats have a keen eye on approaching dangers and remain safe up in their precarious strongholds. To venture down is to invite a struggle, but they are hardy and armed with sharp defenses. In the interest of self-preservation and as part of a well-rounded life it is important to undergo times of seclusion and hermitage to get in touch with your true being. But the time comes for everyone who gets a glimpse of the truth to report it, however dire the risk, or how thankless the reception. Their legacy will live on with those that finally come to take their sage advice and are saved by it.

Hawk

Focus, Vision



“Get your ducks in a row”

Sometimes in order to get back on course when you have lost your way, you need to take a bird’s eye view. With so much ground to cover, it can be really easy to get overwhelmed. When it seems like there is so much to tackle on your to do list, that you end up wasting a ton of time just getting your bearings and trying to organize and end up accomplishing none of it, it’s time to build up some momentum. It’s a lot easier to glide along once you have already taken off, so pick one thing and focus exclusively on it. See it through to the end, and once one thing is checked off, no matter how small, it will become much easier to start breaking the other ones up. Make a practice of it, and

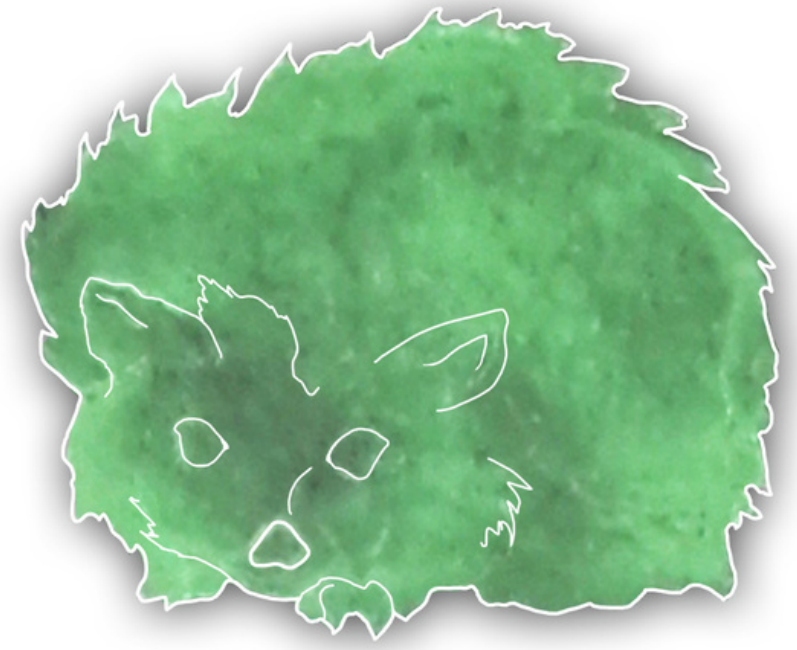
you will find yourself much less often crushed under the weight of an endless list. Make procrastination a thing of the past!

Use each task as a springboard to get some speed going into the next one. Don't try to multitask though, pick just one thing and put your full attention on it. If the items on your list just don't seem doable, reach for something that doesn't appear urgent to get done and don't get hung up on the feeling you 'should' be doing something else. Remember, you are using it to get onto the updrafts. And from that high vantage, the whole world will be laid out before you in a new perspective and it will be easy to swoop in on your prey.



Hedgehog

Perception,
Resistance to Evil



“See the forest for its trees”

Detecting the presence of malevolence is usually ascribed to some sort of psychic faculty or sixth sense. The hairs on the back of your neck stand on end, there is an unexplainable chill. Something just doesn't feel right. A hedgehog's hairs are always standing up, on guard and watchful for ill-willed advances, and they also possess resistance to venom. Being defensive as a default on a practical level can help to ward off looming dangers, but take care not to be closed off to a potentially positive experience due to fear. Either hyper sensitizing yourself or becoming numb have serious drawbacks, it's important to cultivate a middle ground of perception in order to clearly see the world.

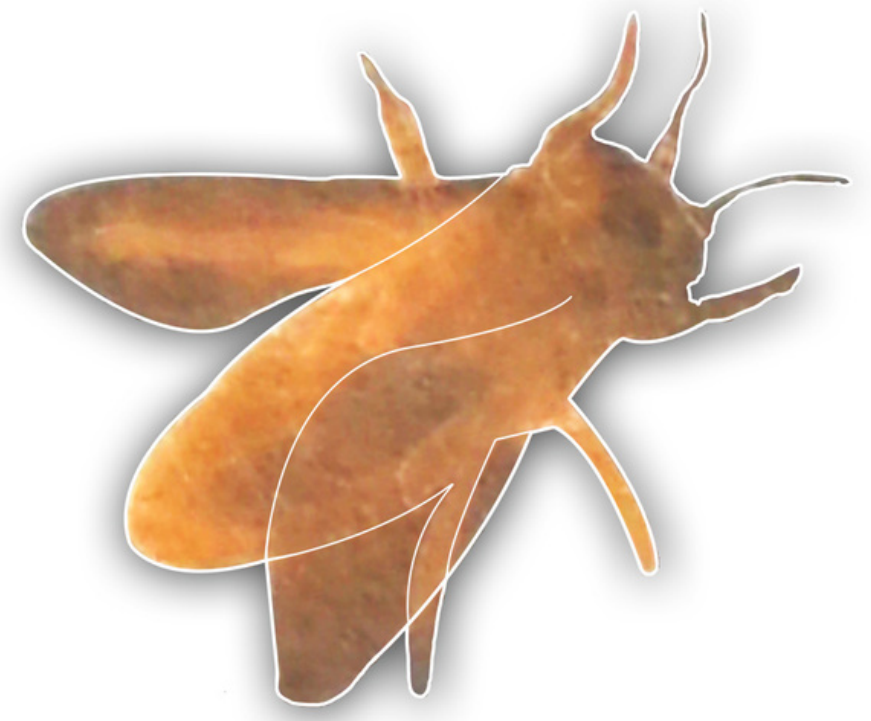
When the hemispheres of our brain are working effectively in tandem, we can both hone in on details when the time is appropriate, and zoom out to a big picture view to keep everything in the right context. But above and beyond the general ability to moderate, there is also a world of nuance to being able to focus on the observations which are most relevant. Meta level thinking and attribution of value allow us to navigate the world illusion.

When you have already made up your mind about your values, traps and pitfalls around you seem to glow with warning. Temptation holds no sway for someone who only has eyes for their own aim.



Honeybee

Industry, Civilization

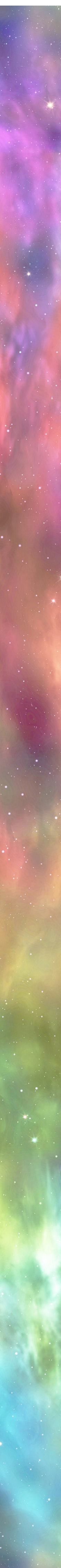


“Many hands make for light work”

Social insects are in a class all their own when it comes to environmental impact. They are able to produce such incredible populations, and accomplish so much productivity in terms of pollination and energy conversion, and yet despite having large numbers to maintain they are not a drain on their surrounding environment. Their ‘cities’ don’t encroach on the surrounding terrain or disturb the habitats of other animals, and many plants rely heavily upon them for successful reproduction.

There is a lot we could learn from them in terms of sustainability and coexistence, but socially they excel in a lot of ways too. Each worker is contributing to a larger objective of maintaining their hive, and it could be argued that they sacrifice their autonomy in doing so, but each is raised and provided for its whole life through.

maintaining their hive, and it could be argued that they sacrifice their autonomy in doing so, but each is raised and provided for its whole life through. They protect one another as a family and share the load of work. No one is beholden to any other disproportionately, and even the queen who is being tended to does so in exchange for dedicating her life to the success of the group instead of subjugating those below. Once the whole has agreed to the terms of the standard of living they would like to enjoy, and the tasks are divided equitably, truly remarkable structures can be created and stand the test of time. It's not so much that any individual is particularly hard working, although each can do a lot, it's the intelligence with which they communicate and work efficiently that they are able to create such an excess of what they need. Their abundance cascades to everything around them, making new life possible for many others, so take that attitude with you when you introspect about your own habits and lifestyle. Are you effectively sharing your workload, or does something need adjustment? Delegate where necessary, and make a beeline to your bliss!



Horse

Simplicity, Love,
Purity



“Never look a gift horse in the mouth”

Blessings often come in disguise, and it's counterproductive to greet each one as if it were a Trojan horse. Just because it isn't exactly what you thought you wanted, or you aren't sure what it could be used for, doesn't mean it won't serve a purpose in your life.

Remember that energy moves constantly, and the valence of things can be easily overlooked by someone who isn't looking for them specifically. If a gift seems innocent, accept it with grace, and don't get tangled up with assumptions of ill will or sabotage.

Is a stray dog an unwanted responsibility, another hungry mouth to feed, or your new best friend? The one who will stick by you through thick and thin, and make you laugh when all you want to do is cry? That may be completely up to you, and your perception of unexpected happenings.

Open up your heart with love, remember that the universe is made of love and let things simply be in accordance with their nature. It may be true that things sneak in just to do us harm, but in order to receive blessings you must be prepared for pain and accept your vulnerability. Bear that burden, like a horse does with its rider, who it probably would prefer not to carry but learns to love nonetheless.



Hydra

Caution,
Sagacity



“Don’t bite the hand that feeds you”

The oldest law in recorded human history is now our most poignant cautionary tale: an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. Our mythos is littered with tales of revenge, each ultimately concluding that vengeance is the most futile pursuit. Like the heads of the hydra in a never ending cycle, each one that is severed grows back more. The creation seeks to destroy the creator to prove itself superior in an eternal string of patricide. Then it turns to receive praise only to discover it has slain the only thing that could give it the validation and love it really needs. The moral is to not become so prideful that you lose the support of those who would have been proud of you.

The ends do not always justify the means. Losing sight of what is really important runs the risk of ruin not only of your own life, but potentially those of everyone around you as you pay no heed to collateral in your quest.

As we deify ourselves and play God in order to dominate our environment, in our blindness and stupidity we kill everything which was sustaining our very lives. And to add to the irony, we have a sick fascination with recreating our own image, and recoil in shock when our dolls take the same offense to us as we did our forebears. We must be very careful of the legacy we are leaving, if our children come to be ashamed of us maybe they are right to. Every generation instinctively assumes it will be better than the last, and seeks to replace the old only to realize some time later that they were really all the same in the end. So be humble. Honor your creator, or your creations will treat you in kind.



Iguana

Patience,
Understanding



“Go with the flow”

It isn't easy to keep a cool head when something goes wrong, especially when it's something you were really emotionally invested in. Trying to withstand a full force blow while standing still really only works out when you have the mass to beat it. Otherwise a better tactic might be to redirect the energy. In a collision, if you can't avoid it entirely, the best you might be able to manage is the change the angle enough to minimize damage.

The element of water is characterized by its ability to transmute and reflect rather than resist. In order to roll with the punches, take an event that seems to be in opposition to your desired outcome and see if it could fulfill another.

Maybe not getting to do one thing frees up time and resources to do something else. Maybe a setback is an indication that you aren't quite ready to do something, and it's giving you a heads up to back up and get better prepared.

Maybe the universe has a better opportunity waiting just around the corner, which you would have overlooked if you still had your blinders on in pursuit of the goal you really thought you wanted, but wasn't the best fit.

Don't ask yourself to be happy about bad things happening, that's not realistic, just don't let it take you out of commission and compromise other viable options.

The faster you can change direction instead of dwelling on it, the less damage you will take in the long run. If you stress about every single thing that goes wrong on your journey, you won't be able to see all the things around you that are trying to help you out!



Incense

Faith, Piety



“Where there’s smoke, there’s fire”

Sometimes walking the talk does require a little showmanship. Little habits or rituals can give us a sense of formality and help reinforce certain desirable behaviors. While it’s not good to be all smoke and mirrors and just be putting on a show to create the appearance of being spiritual so others will perceive us that way, if going through the physical motions of something as simple as lighting incense helps you to get into the headspace of doing something to cultivate that side of you, do it.

Nobody else has any bearing on your process. If it’s not hurting anyone else, and it makes you feel a certain way, do it. If you need to hold a feather to fly, grab one. Don’t let it become a crutch to the

point where you will not perform the task without it, but use it as long as you need to in order to build up the skills or habits you need to achieve your goals. If you are seen to be using ritual objects or focus items, make sure they are really lending to your regularity of practice. Create a feedback loop where your belief in the relevance of the thing, helps boost the faith in the importance of what you are doing, and that can be a really powerful motivation when other things are getting in the way.

Maybe it's your morning coffee; don't let someone try to talk you out of it for the benefit of some narrative if it's part of what helps you do your thing. The fact that we can drink a magical bean potion to give us energy so we can inscribe incantations on our crystal scrying devices and tell stories to people all over the globe is pretty fantastic!

Anyone who says otherwise about it is lame, and you don't need that kind of negativity in your life.

Jaguar

Intuition, Triumph over
Darkness, Valor



“A leopard cannot change his spots”

Once you accept something as constant, it's easy to become acclimated to it and start to use it to your advantage. The leopard is a specialized night hunter, thriving where its cousins wouldn't be able to function. In order to overcome fear, we have to face it, and it's often possible to find the way to defeat something within its very nature if we take the time to really get to know it. Our social bubbles and protected lives have allowed us to delude ourselves that there are such things as anomalies, or that we can shield ourselves from things we don't like by simply ignoring them. But that's not true or possible, everything within the whole of existence has a right

to exist and a reason it's here. It is our job to integrate it into our understanding of the world, not its job to conform to our expectations. And anything we do try to discard is simply filed away in our subconscious as nightmares, growing into oversized irrational fears and phobias.

We fear that which we do not understand, even and especially one another, so the better thing to do is spend time getting to know each other and find out that we are all really in this together. Valor is usually portrayed as knights in shining armor, but the greatest victory we can have isn't over some imaginary horde of orcs, but the lower version of ourselves that fights for control every single day and wins out in most. Do the shadow work, you might not like the beast you find down there, but letting it run amok is really not an option and the sooner we bring it to heel, the sooner we can uncover the commonality that has been hiding.



Jellyfish

Tranquility, Being



“Still waters run deep”

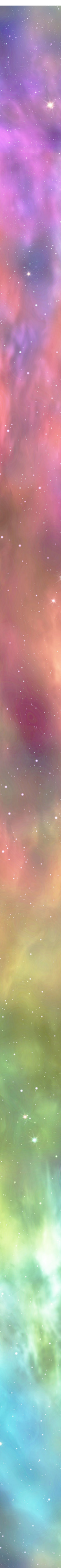
You are already enough. You don't have to do anything above and beyond existing to command basic acknowledgement and respect, and you don't owe anyone anything. In that same way, nobody is beholden to you either, so make sure you aren't forfeiting your sovereignty to allegiance or debt to something else or living in an overly dependent way.

Float freely, and take some time to just be quiet and still. It isn't necessary to fill every waking moment with bustle, and you run the risk of falling victim to being fully controlled by circumstance if you do not leave some wiggle room to simply exist. Rest is not only sleeping, but having waking time for things like meditation,

being in nature, daydreaming, or watching clouds.

In the age where time is money, it's easy to forget that our time here is limited; it wasn't given to us just to auction off to the highest bidder. Your sanity will benefit from the act of defiance that is simply, being.

Jellyfish are passive hunters, waiting for prey to get snagged by their tentacles, gambling fully on being in the right place at the right time with infinite patience for that to occur. We waste a lot of time chasing what tends to be found conveniently after we give up, maybe it's that exhausting ourselves is the only way to slow down enough to notice what was well within reach.



Jerboa

Teacher, Wise,
Frugal



“Discretion is the better part of valor”

When you find yourself in unfamiliar surroundings, look to the things that are thriving there. Even if the environment appears desolate or uninhabited, if you are still and simply listen you will find signs of life all around. Don't be too quick to panic in the absence of things which you believe you need, like water in the desert.

While it can be comforting to find yourself surrounded by sources of these things, and overabundance we aren't even utilizing, it isn't necessary for things to be so and we may be overlooking all of the other ways we could be thriving with other resources available which we mistakenly undervalue. It is easy to be overwhelmed by extremes, either lack or surplus, but remember it just takes time to take stock of these regional

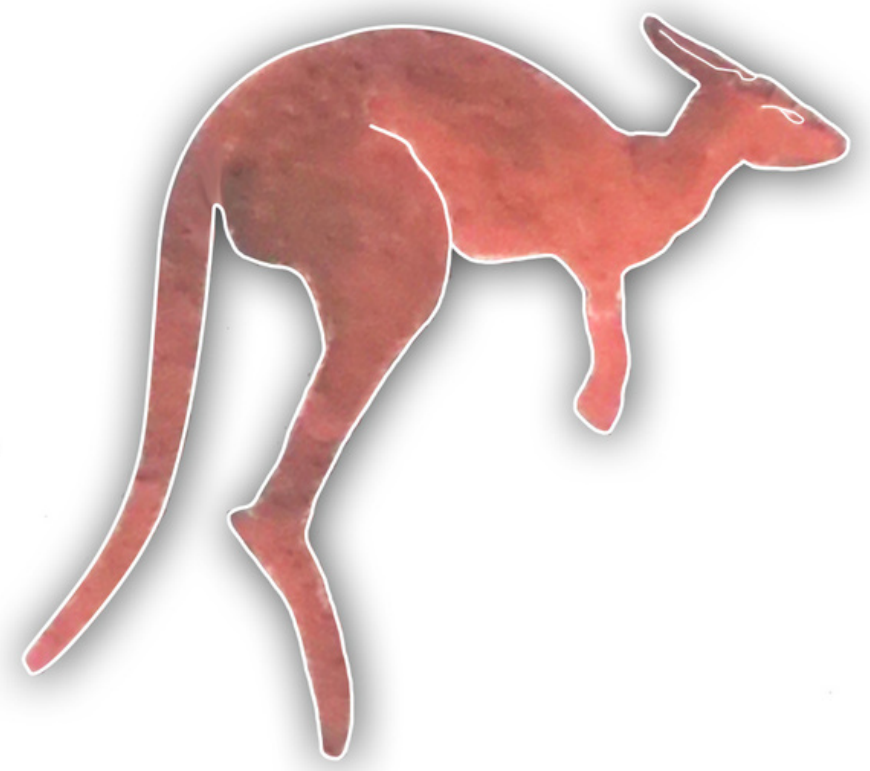
differences and adapt to their unique demands. Being transported from a lake to a desert may be a bit of a shock, but creatures have found a way to live in both places, and when traded both would find themselves equally out of their element. In everything you do, look for wisdom in animals which have evolved to suit their surroundings, or come up with clever solutions to the challenges of life.

Biomimicry is the process by which we incorporate these innovations into our own lifestyles and technology. All it requires is the willingness to observe and learn. Instead of declaring, "I need..." first verify that you even do. The tradeoffs in nature are extremely complex, instead of looking for the requirement as you are accustomed to it, be open to the possibility it is slightly hidden, coexisting with something else. Many animals get all the water they need from their food, and do not need to drink.

The basic need is the same, but the behavior is different. Find satisfaction from what is available, in other words, be grateful for what you have, and you may notice you have even more than you thought.

Kangaroo

Decisiveness, Mobility



*“Before you judge someone,
walk a mile in their shoes”*

In the vastness of the outback, there are few notable landmarks to help you find your way out. You are vulnerable out in the open, at the mercy of the harsh sun beating down and with no shade in sight your only recourse is to cover a lot of ground quickly! Life is like that sometimes, as the universe is composed of mostly nothingness and even the most solid matter is overwhelmingly made of empty space. When it seems like what you need is such a rarity, it can be hard to make a decision on the right way to go, risking wandering aimlessly in any direction you would set out. However it can be dangerous to stay put during relentless waves of heat. It's not a

sure thing that it will let up either, so sometimes the best course of action is to take a leap of faith! Recognizing that something isn't going to magically get better takes a lot of self-honesty, especially when you aren't sure something more fitting actually exists. The more distance you can put between yourself, and something that wasn't right for you can make it a lot easier to sympathize with others and see things from a fresh perspective.

New opportunities may make themselves known to you once you get a chance to cool off, but that may involve putting feet to pavement! Find a rhythm that helps you make incremental progress, maybe it's leaps and bounds, maybe it's one foot after the other, but once you've set your sights on a point in the distance take off running and don't stop.



Kirin

Mindfulness,
Integrity



“The world needs ditch diggers too!”

How you do one thing is how you do everything. Putting on your best behavior around the company president, but then talking down to the janitor is a sure sign of personal immaturity. Do the right thing no matter what you stand to gain or who is watching, and don't disparage those who may be viewed to be doing 'lesser' work.

Everything that uplifts you and helps you do your own job should be treated with the utmost respect and appreciation.

This is especially true of the human elements who can each exercise their free will if they feel their contributions are not being valued, because their support can be pulled out like a rug from beneath you. Trodding heavily and

expecting those around you to make you look good won't do anything to endear them to your cause, and especially if you are in a hierarchy or business setting, destabilizing the base of the structure is a great way to bring the whole thing toppling down from your hubris.

A job worth doing is worth doing well, and putting pride into your work at every stage of the game preserves the integrity of the whole system, that's why many fables tell of a god or king who descends to a lowly station to test the loyalty of their subjects. Treat others as you would want to be treated if your roles should be reversed, and don't ever forget where you came from if you had to struggle in a position you didn't like to get where you are now. To do so would be like turning away a deity disguised as a beggar come knocking at your door and the curse you earn is living in a world where people treat each other that way. Exercise consideration for others, as conscientiousness is the backbone of a stable society.



Lobster

Longevity,
Discipline



“Draw a line in the sand”

In research about hierarchies, it was found that dominance in lobsters is determined by posture and serotonin levels. If they win a fight, they spread out and make themselves look big; if they lose they crunch down and basically get depressed. If you give a lobster serotonin after a fight, even if they lost, they will stretch right out and go at it again.

We inherited that same circuit in our brains, and work very much the same way, that’s why discipline has so much more to do with our perception of achieving small goals and ability to get on a roll. It’s not a zero sum game either; there is infinite success to go around and everyone’s feelings about achievement vary, so you don’t have to be famous or

have a high up position at work in order to produce a lot of serotonin, feel really great about yourself, and empowered to keep tackling more things. Figure out what boosts you up, whatever gets you to that happy place, double down on it even if other people think it's lame. Because you aren't competing against those other people, but against previous versions of yourself.

Adopt an attitude of readiness to take on the world, and reinforce it with your posture. Take up some space, believe that you matter, and hormonally at the very least it will start to be true. That might be just the edge you need when the time does come to compete against someone else, for resources, a position, or a date. Be confident, put up your claws, and even if you don't win that round, realize that you hold the power to bounce back and try again at something else.



Lotus

Fertility, Fruition,
Culmination



“Stop and smell the roses”

For everything there is a season, we endure the bitterness of winter and weather the storms of early spring in anticipation of the world finally warming up and coming into bloom. Things are precious when they are rare, and the ephemeral nature of flowers is a large part of what makes them so attractive. In order to prolong their enjoyment, we distill them into perfumes, each precious drop requires so many blossoms and thus each tier of refinement adds another level of worth. Beautiful smells and colors hold a powerful sway over our memory and form our relationships with sensation and aesthetic, as though casting a spell. This is exactly what the

plant intends as it has evolved to produce the perfect little prize to draw forth multitudes of pollinators, and perpetuate its own life cycle, and in many ways we engage in this same behavior.

We cultivate ourselves and offer up some precious fleeting glimpse of the best possible version, in the handful of truly great works we are able to produce in a lifetime or truly magical moments we create with others. It only takes a few essential drops to enhance a whole batch, so when it comes time for your day in the sun, radiate with all of your inner beauty and let it color your entire life!



Lynx

Justice, Fairness,
Revealing Secrets



“Let the cat out of the bag”

Opening up can be terrifying. Trying to gauge whether someone is getting to know you just to pinpoint a weakness to exploit later, or really wants to know what makes you tick because they care is an exhausting game of chess. We spend a long time trading pawns before we take any risk with the real units, but revealing deeply guarded secrets can be a powerful shortcut to finding a real connection with someone.

The lynx is an elusive animal which treads very lightly, and is extremely selective. This totem is an invitation to take a quality over quantity approach, but when the moment is right to lay it on the line, it's crucial to remember that the truth reigns over all of us.

Justice cannot exist where there is secrecy and deceit. So to get transparency out of others, we need to be willing to grant it ourselves. While it's scary to put something compromising out there, it's also our protectiveness of that fact which is giving it power over us in the first place.

The more we own things which appear to be weaknesses, or put out there things which people who wish us harm could potentially use as ammunition against us to manipulate, the less it would actually bother us if that revelation should happen. Unveiling secrets is a disturbing and painful process, it takes a lot of internal work and potentially confronting our shadow selves, but choosing to do that of our own volition rather than having it forcefully exposed can allow us to deal with it on our own terms instead of someone else's.



Manta

Navigation, Instinct,
Calibration



“Let your heart be your guide”

When you are lost, don't look to your surroundings first to get your bearings. Dig deep inside of yourself, and find that inner peace and connection to your center. Take a moment to breathe and re-calibrate.

You have everything you need to find your way home, trust your gut and don't let outside distractions turn around. It may be a path that you've travelled before, but scenery changes, and the surroundings may have become unfamiliar.

So go with what feels right!
With your heart as your compass, you can't be steered wrong. The manta ray glides through the ocean with otherworldly grace, tapping into sensations totally beyond our comprehension. A silent understanding guides their descent into incredible depths, and they are able to swim peacefully between them and the surface. They love by the light of the full moon, and spring out of the water periodically in a magical display of flight.

Don't be afraid to dive deeply into yourself, for that exactly where you can be found. The truths that discover there and give voice to may be what rise up to defend you in your darkest hour.



Monkey

Ingenuity, Intelligence,
Cleverness



“Monkey see, monkey do”

Necessity is perhaps the most complicated and amorphous concept of all. The line between need and want is very blurry, we can refer to the hierarchy as a solid psychological concept but all in all it's still extremely abstract. We see this very clearly demonstrated by monkeys, with complex social behaviors and tool making capabilities. They can't cover up their base motivations with self-deception like we do. They bond very deeply in their family groups and play at all ages, manipulating objects not only to gather food, but also have fun.

Is necessity really the mother of invention? In contrast to curiosity, which is more, 'what's going on with that thing over there?' desire is all about 'how do I

make this thing right here do what I want?' Maybe it's only a matter of capacity to do so, and that's really all that separates us, but monkeys don't seem to act against their own self-interest as much as we do.

Whims don't take priority over the basic tiers of needs, and even while engaging in play behavior there is still a sensitivity to the environment and ability to work collaboratively to defend against predators and the elements. As desperately as we need to protect the environment which accounts for our basic needs, we act in deliberate defiance of that, sometimes delighting in it. So does the solution lay in some happy accident? Can we play our way to our common goal of survival?



Monolith

Monachism,
Hermitage



“A rolling stone gathers no moss”

Isolation is commonly categorized as something unhealthy or undesirable. Solitary confinement is a cruel punishment, but when we choose to enter into solitude voluntarily it can become a very powerful mode for self-discovery. Removing outside influences and distractions can allow you to focus on looking inward and develop a more intimate bond with your core being.

Our fast paced lives don't leave the time we need to internalize and reflect on events that happen to us, so they tend to just pile up subconsciously and plague us in dreams and anxieties until we stop and make sense of them. We are encouraged to just keep pushing forward and ignore things that our intuition is trying to call attention to, and rather than do regular maintenance to protect our mental health and emotional being it is almost socially celebrated to let issues become critical and erupt.

If a problem isn't visible for the most part it isn't acknowledged or validated, so serious misbehaviors or breakdowns are the only sort of valid expressions of psychological distress. If you find yourself avoiding alone time, try to pinpoint whether you are actually uncomfortable with it, or if your conditioning is telling you that it's something abnormal. You don't have to dislike being around people in order to enjoy spending time by yourself, the two are not mutually exclusive. A healthy individual can alternate between the two modes without distress.

When your body is sick, you look to the areas of discomfort to figure out what is wrong, you don't just ignore the pain and try to change the subject. Take your mental and emotional wellbeing seriously, and realize this will require setting time aside to be alone, scary as that can be sometimes. Practice for the times when you might not have an alternative, and cultivate your enjoyment of your own inner world so that it can be a source of sustenance for you and a place which you can go to for peace.



Moth

Serenity, Gentleness



“Once in a blue moon”

Grace is being in the middle of ugliness and being able to keep it from becoming hell. There will always been disasters and tragedies in life, but we often make things worse by overreacting and lashing out. To

be able to stand in the moment and recognize that things could be worse, not as a comparison to a different circumstance, but to realize that there is an even more unfavorable version of what is currently happening that has to be actively resisted.

Exercising one’s personal power and using their presence to take a stance of peace and represent that to everyone around them may require choosing not to react, which takes incredible willpower.

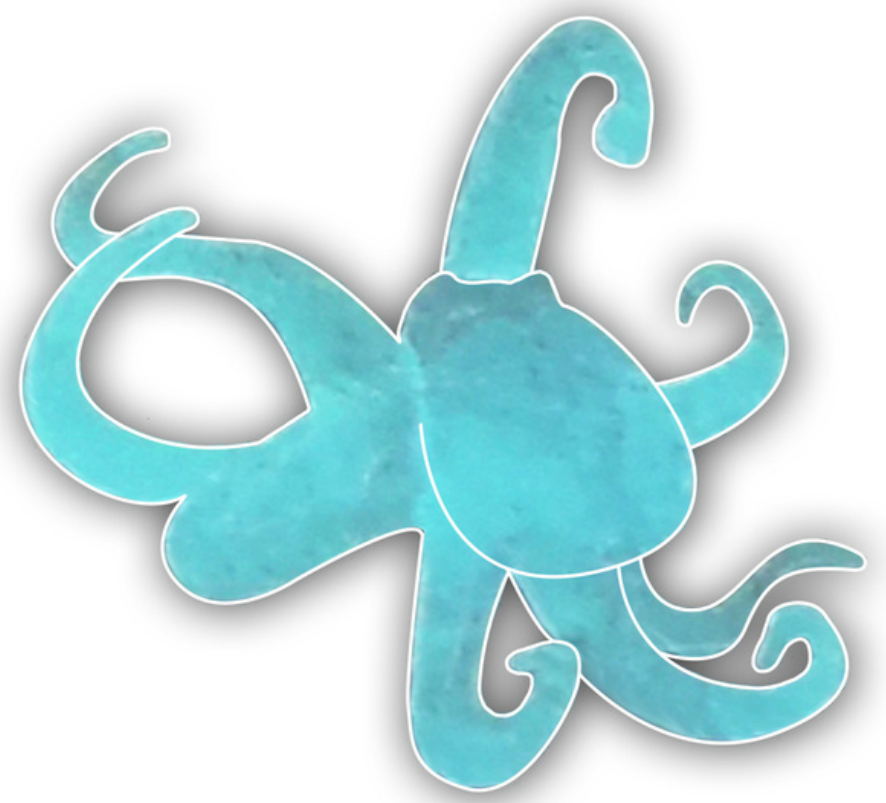
Courage isn't always about charging ahead and swinging a sword, sometimes it's realizing that vengeance will not bring something back that was lost, or that intervening in something that is meant to work itself out will only put you in the line of fire.

When a situation is ablaze, instead of being drawn to it like a moth to flame, as the old adage goes, be serene. Find acceptance for what is happening in order to react more appropriately, and mitigate excessive damage which could be caused by confusion. We are living in borrowed bodies on borrowed time, just as moths are fragile and short lived we should reserve our strength for what really matters and learn to let go of that which we cannot control. Practice serenity in times of calm, be elated. Be over the moon. And embrace that feeling when things aren't going your way. It could turn the tide of something that was headed for an even worse outcome.



Octopus

Flexibility,
Adaptation



“Cross that bridge when you come to it”

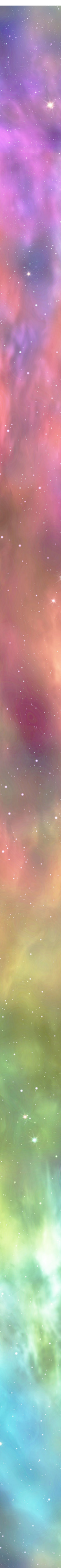
As sea temperatures rise, and conditions become disadvantageous for many ocean creatures, a handful are actually managing to thrive in what would otherwise be a worst case scenario.

One of those is the octopus, due to its tolerance for the change in conditions and high level of intelligence and adaptability. Being able to live in many places and eat a variety of things gives a massive advantage when things start to go wrong, but being scary smart is really the icing on the cake when it comes to excelling instead of just surviving. Camouflage and ability to get into small spaces, open containers, and traverse land when needed are among its utilities, but the signature of this totem is the willingness to do what is necessary, and not get too

rigidly set on a certain way of being.

Rapid evolution and grace under pressure are things we can cultivate ahead of a calamity by becoming mentally prepared. By not becoming attached, and floating freely, we can better take advantage of opportunities that present themselves.

Letting go of persona and pride, playing pretend when threats appear, even accepting the inevitability of problems and finding acceptance before they happen are great mental exercises to become more flexible. Don't back yourself into a corner with anxiety about the future, just take a fear that you might have about a negative outcome from something upcoming and face it head on. Do what you can to prepare yourself and minimize fallout, but also realize that if there's a problem, it's not the end of the world. You will find a way to deal with it, and the more confident that you are of that fact, the greater the chance you have of even turning it around!



Otter

Cooperation,
Honesty



“Great minds think alike”

It’s easy to be honest when everything is already going right, but fessing up to something that you are actually sorry you did takes courage. Trust is the basis for all relationships, and trying to bank up credit from instances where nothing is at stake doesn’t count for anything. In the end, one ‘oh shit’ cancels out a hundred ‘atta boys’, we automatically focus on the negatives and they hold greater sway in our mind.

So, instead of trying to quickly smooth things over, take the time to really own up to a mistake. Not only will it really reinforce in the mind of who it’s affecting that you will take accountability for your actions and can be trusted to be honest in the future when the chips are down, but it will go a lot farther toward preventing those screw ups for yourself. If you are

truly interested in self-improvement, take those lumps. That's not to say beat yourself up and dwell on it, but be upfront and honest right when it happens so it's easier to let it go and move forward. It might not be as big of a deal as you think to the person in question, but the fact that you tried to hide it very well could be.

Conduct yourself with integrity, and choose to only surround yourself with people who are doing the same. Don't accept dishonest behavior from your peers, because you never know what life is going to throw at you. Just because it seems like something minor in the meantime doesn't mean that when something bad really happens they won't act exactly the same way. When you make a habit of being honest, you can act in a way which is more authentic and carefree, you don't need to waste energy protecting your lies and keeping your story straight.



Owl

Silence,
Taciturnity



*“If you don’t have anything nice to say,
be silent”*

Our world is littered with noise. It seems that listening is a skill that takes intentional development, when we’ve been taught our whole lives to get the last word in. But detecting opportunities requires quiet most of all, both quiet presentation of ourselves and quiet of the mind. Meditation is commonly touted as the method by which to quiet the mind, but a lot of people find that really difficult.

What might also help is to practice techniques for negative thought interruption in order to achieve the quiet, and then focus on cultivating meditation as a form of listening to what’s left. Kind of like how when you are trying to drive and navigate somewhere, you need to turn the music down.

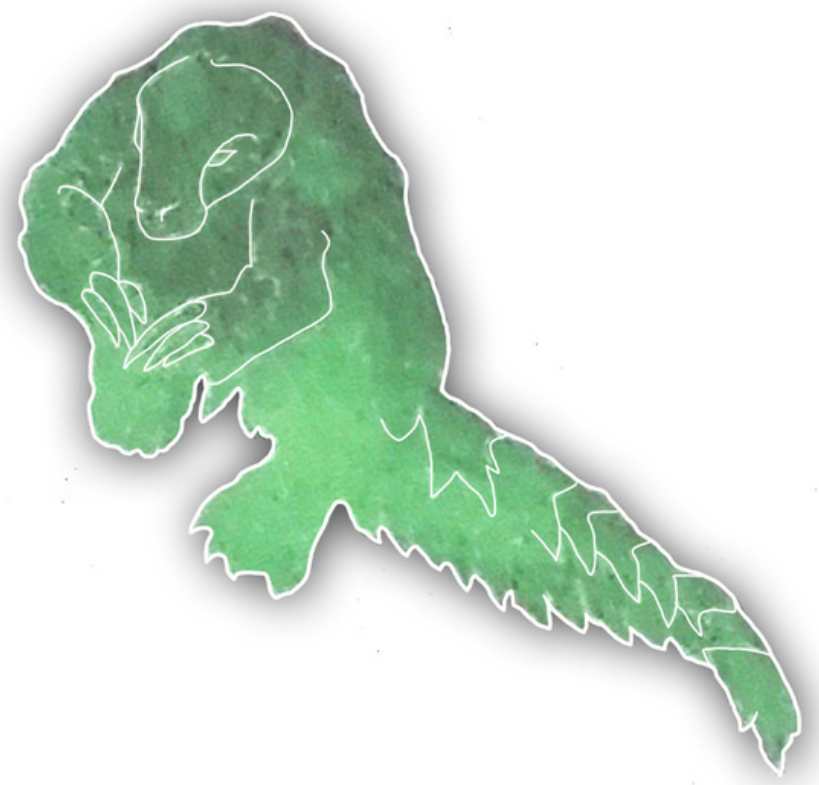
Yes it seems irrational, but constant overstimulation does play a role in our ability to tune into other senses. So in the same way, our instinct to be overly judgmental can really interfere with our own inner peace.

While it's not good to be a doormat and let people get away with behavior that doesn't resonate with us, and there is a time to stand up for our principles, in the greater interest of self-preservation and peace it is most often the best policy to save it. Not just vocalizing, but even thinking it, because people vibrating that lowly really are not worth our time or attention. Tuning it out entirely, as an owl does the howl of the wind as it glides silently and listens for prey can help keep us on course. Let annoyances be just white noise in the background. Don't grant them any quarter.



Pangolin

Walking the Talk,
Authenticity



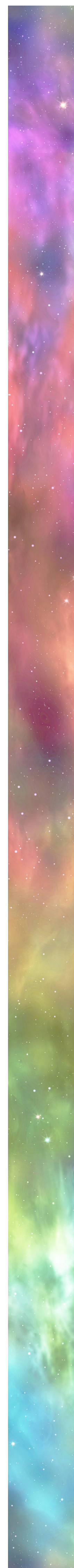
“Reap what you sow”

When it comes to what you really want, your real dreams and ambitions, do you want to win by luck or default because everyone else messes up? Would it really mean anything to you if the victory was just handed to you, or would it always nag in the back of your mind that you hadn't really earned it? For some things that don't necessarily matter, it's great when life gives you little opportunities to take a shortcut, or benefit from the advice of someone who has gone through it before. But when it comes down to your own life path, and the things that make you uniquely you, there is no easy way out. The best piece of advice I ever got from a stranger was that 'art is the thing that you can do, that nobody else can do.' People

can emulate your style but at the end of the day, it's really important that you do what you came here to do.

Nobody can live your life for you, and what you have to say comes from the culmination of who you are at your core, what you have been through in your life experience, and therefore how you choose to respond to your circumstances.

Conducting yourself with integrity in spite of your suffering is a testament to the triumph of the human spirit, and in the end it is those who choose to bear that burden honorably that find the inner strength to do so. So do it, not only because that's what it would take to reach your victory condition, but because it's what you WOULD do. Make it unacceptable to be anything other than yourself. Even if you can't win that particular bout, you will have won the war.



Phoenix

Magnanimity,
Self-Sacrifice



“He who gives quickly gives twice”

In order to be reborn as a higher version of ourselves, sometimes it is necessary to burn away old parts which no longer serve us. Burned out, bitter, resentful parts we have become overly attached to. This painful molting occurs at pivotal moments in our lives, and our willingness to voluntarily submit to it is what determines how painful it will be.

It is very difficult to determine when to stand one's ground and fight, and when to give in to the entropy of decay in order to make way for something new to be born.

That is why bravery in the face of suffering, and trust in the conservation of energy are the hallmarks of a magnanimous heart. The phoenix is quick to immolate itself, knowing its own power

and trusting it will rise once again, but the gesture is even more noble when it is done for the benefit of another.

Self-sacrifice is the truly redeeming virtue of man, and expedient generosity without hesitation can make all the difference in the world in swaying the balance back into the light during times of darkness. The firebird teaches us all how to do this, though we run the risk of only being able to give ourselves once, inner peace is what will guide us safely through that danger. If a victory is to be had, this is how it is done.



Rain

Forgiveness,
Cleansing

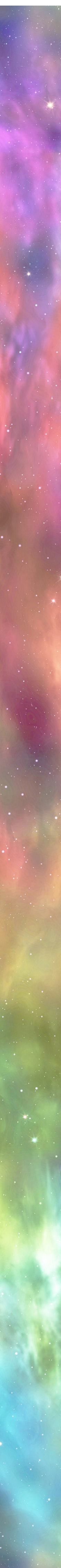


“Lost like tears in the rain”

Both chalk doodles on the sidewalk, and blood on the battlefield are washed away by the same rain. Nothing is forever, and isn't possible for us to hold on only to the good things, but that is part of the magic of forgiveness. In this way, even mistakes that can't be fixed can at least fade with time.

Evil cannot reign forever, and the sun will always come out again after the storm. So let the heavy droplets fall. As pressure is released and the world is brought back into balance, seeds that were hiding during the forest fire are now soaking in fertile soil. The dead wood has been burned away. They will get their chance now in the light of a new day to grow tall like their forbears.

When you are suffering, take notice of the things which are in your power to change and those which are not. Be true to your feelings, mourn your losses, and give yourself permission to let go. Let one hand wash the other, and open your eyes to the beauty of all the new possibilities that even a seeming tragedy can bring. Because you can't have a rainbow without a little rain!



Raven

Magic, Prophecy



“A canary in a coal mine”

In our enlightened age we have a tendency to dismiss instantly anything that could be seen as superstitious or intuitive. The problem with that is, it's a very slippery slope. Unfortunately that attitude has extended to observable facts, and denial as a temperament is very widespread even into situations where it is putting us all in great danger.

We have hunches for a reason. Our guts are trying to protect us from perils which are difficult to justify with reason, but are nonetheless potentially threatening to our wellbeing. The best bet is, go with your gut if you don't have time to gather more information, and be in the habit of doing that so that when good evidence is presenting itself you don't throw that out either.

The perfect analogy here is from the olden times of fossil fuels and extremely iffy workplace safety standards, it was common practice to lower a cage with a canary in it into a coal shaft to see if the air was breathable. If the bird came back up dead, they knew not to send people down there, highly.

Besides that being an obvious and ironic climate change reference, the point is more importantly that we didn't get to the place we are at by accident nor by the willful ignorance of a few. Widespread systemic valence of gossip over either, inner conviction, OR verifiable facts is the common enemy of faith, science, and truth itself. Remember that there is a time and place for both of them, and we have run out of time for the mediocre mob mentality of just parroting back misinformation at each other. Take a vantage as the crow flies, be above the influence of mindless tweeting and see things as they truly are, within and without.



Rooster

Joy, Confidence

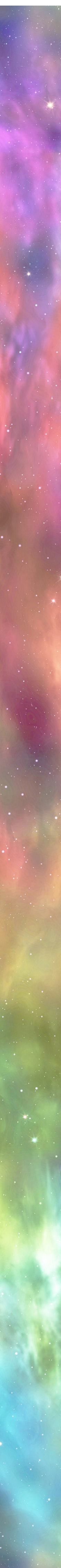


“Can’t sneak a sunrise past a rooster”

Every new day brings with it a wealth of opportunities, and that’s something to crow about! If your neighbors don’t appreciate your enthusiasm, just remember they might not have bothered to get up at all if it hadn’t been for you. Keep your chin up, and when things don’t turn out as badly as the naysayers thought they would feel free to declare ‘I told you so! Here comes the sun!’

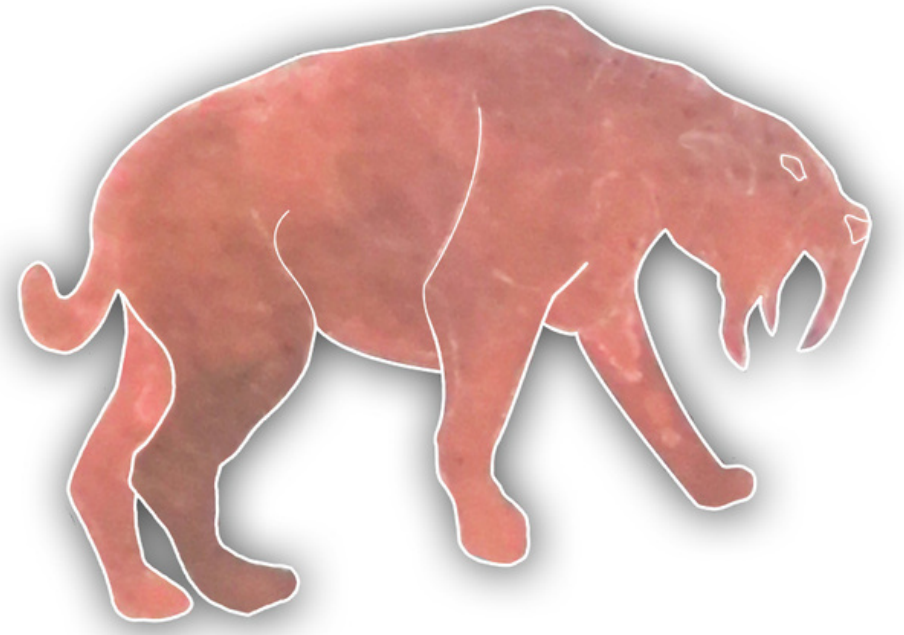
Keep your ideals and expectations high, and set the standard against those who seem to think the sun revolves around only them. When it shines, it shines down on everyone! Now that everyone is up and around, it’s time to go out and seize the day. What will you do with it?

Make sure that if it doesn't come up tomorrow, you lived as well as you could, but conduct yourself confident that it's going to and consider the implications of your actions carrying forward into the future. Strike a good balance between eating the seeds and planting them. Be present in the moment, but mindful of consequences.



Sabertooth

Bravery, Fortitude



“Fortune favors the brave”

Long and red in tooth and claw, this ancient beast was once our greatest foe.

Its visage haunts cave paintings and nightmares, a creature of raw muscle and force which relentlessly hunts us.

Armed to the teeth and claws, the Sabertooth forced us to craft some of our own. It made us smarter, stronger, and fight harder to protect each other.

We stole fire to combat its savagery, and our fear of it forged us into the alpha predator we have now become in its stead.

But now that it is gone, we continue to fight it as a beast lurking deep within ourselves and our subconscious. Do we give into the bloodlust and tyranny that hides in dark corners of our mind?

Will we turn our anger against our self-made adversity, instead of tearing ourselves apart? The shadows of fierce animals play by firelight on the walls of our cave. Can we muster up the courage to walk out into the world and face them? Fear and misunderstanding turn brother against brother, masquerading around as bravery we waste resources waging war.

Maybe if we drive them out into the daylight and reveal them for what they are, we can regain our humanity.



Seagull

Perception, Context,
Lightheartedness



“You can’t judge a book by its cover”

Words only have meaning in context. Everything is colored and affected by what’s around it, and interpreted by the lens it’s being viewed through, so before you make a judgement on the meaning or intent of something be sure you are really getting the full picture! Take a bird’s eye view, scope out the rest of the scene to see if you can glean some insight into what else may be factoring into the communication.

If you are nonetheless catching a similar vibe from everything coming your way, it may be a good idea to take a moment and dust off your glasses. While it’s important to quickly sniff out ill intent, don’t be too quick to assume it if it isn’t warranted. If you maintain a tone of lightheartedness

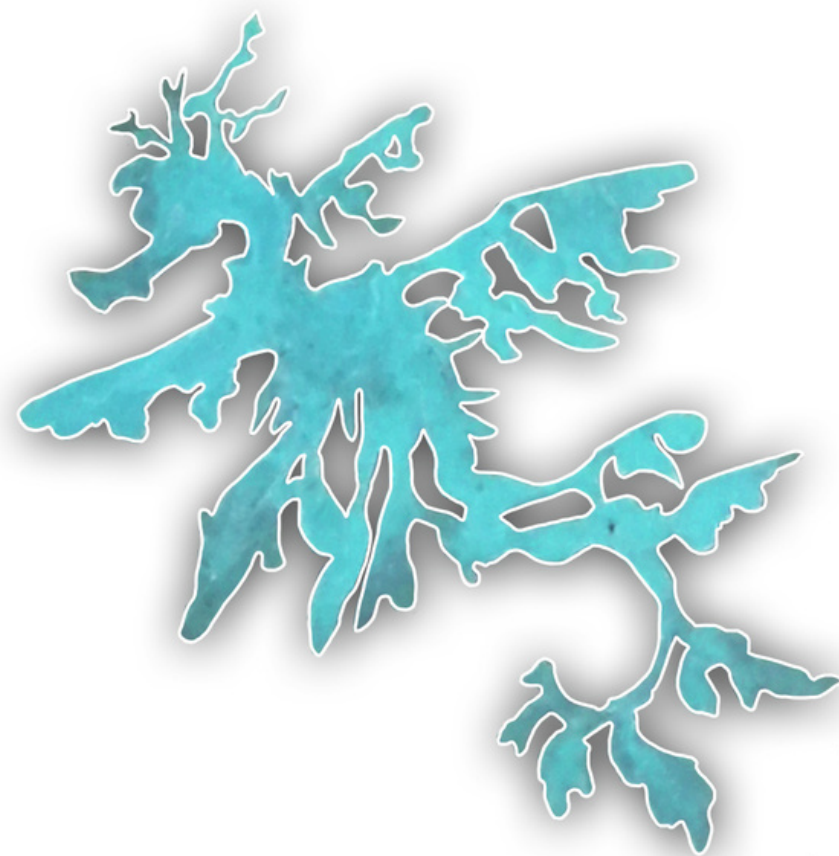
and ask for clarification, it can go a long way toward detecting misunderstandings and preventing them from escalating. If you're the one bearing the message, take precautions to ensure you aren't shot down, like being careful with your body language and using as precise of language as you can.

If the person isn't yet familiar with you and your mannerisms, it may not be appropriate to go heavy on the inside jokes, instead keep the vibe light especially if the news you have to deliver is bad. They may not appreciate the attempts you make to lessen the blow even if you mean well. Where possible, provide context without overdoing it on the detail when you don't know what specifics may set them off. Sometimes it isn't even the problem itself, but the way you find out about it that really makes for a bad day.



Seahorse

Ferry of the Soul,
Luck



“Happy as a clam at high tide”

Serendipity is the sensation we feel when it seems like everything is going our way, when convenient little coincidences are popping up all around us and life is a breeze. Not necessarily a major windfall, but an overall sense of good fortune. A streak of luck, or a good hair day!

A lot of the time these days feel significant because it's like a whole string of happenings, one after another, but really it's our perception of these things as 'lucky' or the positive attitude we then are giving off because of our elevated mood that empowers more of these things to crop up. The more we shine, and bring up the happiness around us, the more willing they are going to be to play in that energy too.

They might be just that little bit friendlier, or slightly more generous. If you walk around frowning, that's not going to be the case, so to cultivate these type of reactions we need to strive to be forthcoming with good vibes ourselves.

Even if we don't necessarily feel that way, it's easy to fake it till you make it with humor and warm greetings, encountering someone with this demeanor when you are having a bad time can really turn your whole day around. This is because of our penchant for recognizing faces, expressions, and social cues; you almost can't help but respond happily when someone is aglow any more than you can stop from yawning when someone else does. So pull out this handy trick when you need a boost, it doesn't cost anything, pretend for a minute that you've received a blessing and see if you can start a chain reaction.



Seal

Compassion,
Relation



“Cut from the same cloth”

Being in the presence of a kindred spirit allows you to really open up and be yourself. When you approach others with a projection of warmth and ease, practice active listening and help them feel validated and self around you, you can bring out a side of them that will really enable you to do the same.

Constantly expecting those around you to make the first move and extend that invitation without being willing to do so yourself will make it difficult to make any real progress in social exchanges. Even if it makes you uncomfortable to initiate contact, bite the bullet and do it once in a while, treat others as though they have the possibility of sharing great experiences with you, because the odds are not in favor of that happening if you approach the situation with an air of

entitlement. Although the current trends are to treat people as temporary and disposable, and there is reasonable cause for suspicion that your current exchange will be short lived, always do your best to strive for the golden rule anyway.

Going through life jaded is only perpetuating the negativity, yeah it's annoying to be called to act as the bigger person when those around you are giving in to infantile behavior, but do it anyway. Embrace your vulnerability and bear your burden properly.

Like the seal spirit who removes their warm fur coat to reveal the person within, you run the risk of someone stealing your guard if you show them who you really are and being left naked. Maybe they are like that because the same thing happened to them. Approach with compassion and kindness, it might not be returned to you directly, but you won't have any hope of making that real connection if you shield yourself and hide away.

If enough of us behave like real human beings, we will all be free to take off our masks and live authentically.

Seed

Cultivation,
Development



“Mighty oaks from acorns grow”

Starting from scratch can seem impossibly dull when all you want to do is skip to the good part. If you find yourself giving up on things shortly after trying, just because you aren't immediately good at them, you are going to have trouble finding satisfaction in anything. It's not a matter of finding that one thing you are naturally proficient at; anyone can gain mastery of any skill with practice and dedication. And really, what's the point of putting time and energy into something you simply don't enjoy, just to try to reap the benefits at the far end?

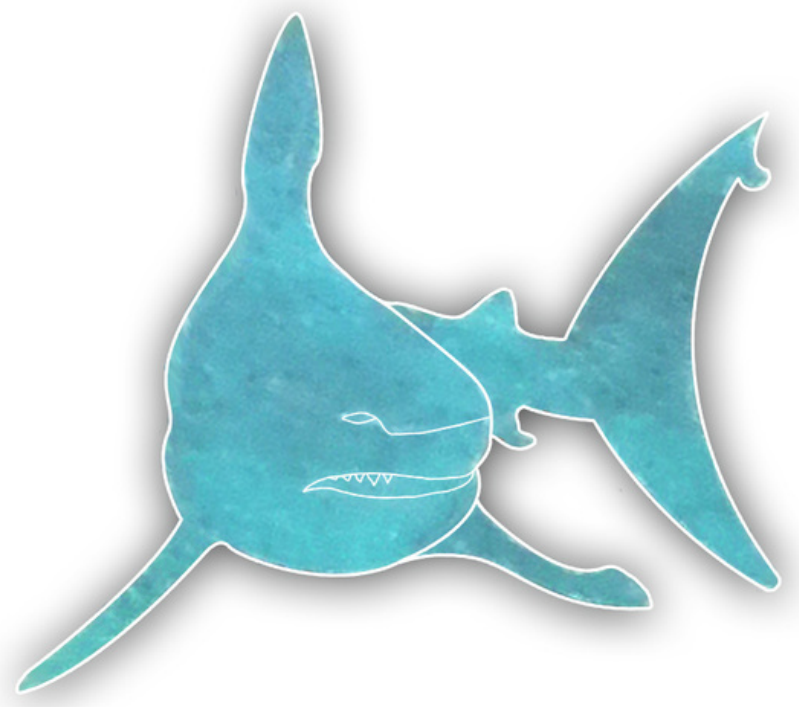
Love of the process is what brings out the very best in you, and that goes for any endeavor, not just the ones that you feel pressured to pursue because you will

have a big salary or social recognition. The more comfortable you get with starting from scratch, and the less you regard it as a waste of time, the more seeds you will get to plant and tend. They might not all grow up to be mighty, but it may be that their needs are similar, and you can take what you learned from one of them on to doing better with the rest.

If you can learn, how to learn, you open the whole world up for yourself. It doesn't feel good to be bad at something, that part is embarrassing because we want to be viewed as proficient! But demonstrating a willingness to be a novice shows the greatest aptitude of all. It takes character, and sharing that early vulnerable stage with someone can show them a really genuine side of you. The connections you make during germination will be all the more precious when you have your day in the sun. You'll know they aren't just a fair weather friend who showed up for the fruits of your labor.

Shark

Power,
Determination



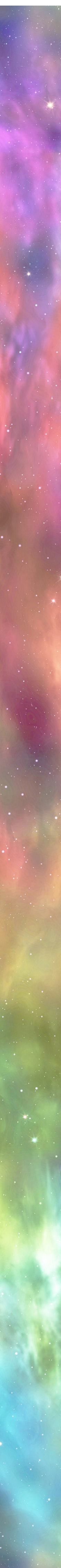
“Speak softly, and carry a large stick”

Instinct can be both tender, and savage.

It is imperative to be able to discern which is needed for the situation! Self-cultivation and expansion of personal power in order to be prepared for confrontation in the future can paradoxically prevent such incidents in the first place. When you are looked on with admiration, and respect for your strength, it is unlikely to be tested, and if it is, the odds are ever in your favor.

Sharks have remained relatively unchanged since the Paleozoic era, and represent a primal stage of evolution where their aptitude as hunters was perfected and there was no need to

change the formula. Simplicity is their hallmark and key to success. Their keen senses pierce through miles of seawater and not even a single drop of blood among a million can elude them. With single minded determination they rush toward the source of the sensation, and do not hesitate to attack when the threshold is met. Face new challenges head on with determination, and trust in your power. Get after it!



Snail

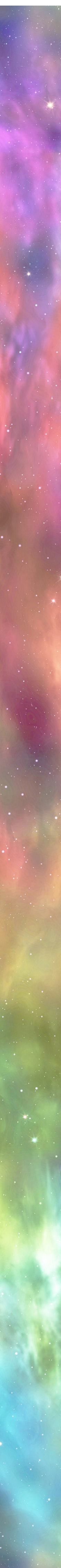
Consciousness,
Expansion



“Ahead of the curve”

Pythagoras said, “There is geometry in the humming of the strings, there is music in the spacing of the spheres.” As function follows form, witnessing instances of sacred geometry in nature grants us insight into the inner structural harmonies that make up our universe. Some are only revealed with help from instruments, but others are plain as day to the naked eye, such as the golden ratio of a snail shell. Even the simplest of creatures can harness magnificent patterns. We have a tendency to get caught up in linear thinking, but the snail reminds us that the majority of distributions are nonlinear.

The spiral starts out very tight at the center when it's young, but as it matures each ring becomes broader. It is self-assembling, the creature doesn't have to make an active choice to become more of itself, but we can. From our center, we can make ever wider cycles outside of our comfort zone, while remaining rhythmic and integrated. Expansion of consciousness, broadening of horizons, by opening your mind you may witness the miracle of tiny movements adding up to a glorious cosmic dance!



Snow

Stillness,
Independence



“Every cloud has a silver lining”

If you are from a northern climate you may have a different sentiment about snow, but let's try to look at it from the perspective of someone for whom it's a rarity. Someone seeing snow for the first time is struck with a sense of wonderment, even though it's made of exactly the same stuff as rain, there is an otherworldly quality about these perfect little crystalline flakes falling from the sky and transforming the landscape for long spans of time before miraculously disappearing. In pictures, snow illustrates that what was once one thing can be something wholly different in no time flat, and go right back again. We celebrate holidays about light and togetherness during this temporary

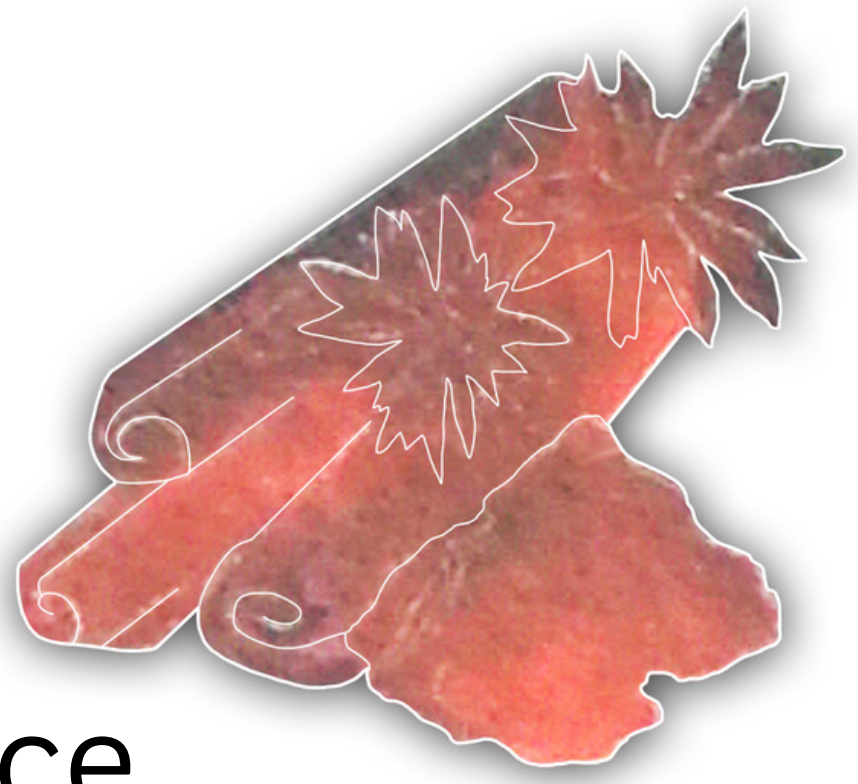
hiatus from growth, when time seems to stand still and abstract notions can dominate the usual bustle of practicality. Being at the mercy of the seasons gives us time to think, and gain perspective when other possibilities are taken away. A pristine field of snow is the greatest temptation, a blank canvas to shape and play in. It's so easy to get lost in the joy of rolling in it, building forts, throwing it at each other, that we seldom take a moment to sit back and reflect on how no two of the tiny specs that make up a winter wonderland are exactly the same under a microscope.

Depending on what you are obligated to get done that day, that whole scene is either a blessing or a curse. When you see this symbol, try to take it as an opportunity to get a fresh perspective, wipe the slate clean and see infinite possibility.



Spice

Passion, Vitality,
Openness to Experience



“Variety is the spice of life”

In order to connect to the current moment, it is helpful to engage the senses. Even if a particular taste or smell isn't exactly your favorite, experiencing it in the moment can invigorate you and force you to pay better attention to your surroundings.

Our ancestors traveled great distances to trade spices; it seems a bit of a shame not to use any of them! Embrace globalism and the amazing opportunities it presents, making more available to us than ever before to experience and learn. Make a conscious effort to incorporate a wider range of sensations in your regiment. Trying new things and stepping outside of your comfort zone can be a great inspiration; you never know what

strange sample will become your new favorite thing!

Openness to the unknown and exposing our vulnerability can make outcomes possible that wouldn't be otherwise, especially in social exchanges. Perception of your approach as receptive may cue the other party to be more understanding toward you, and for the most part people want to be able to share their culture and insights.

It's the stance of respect and appreciation that paves the way for greater understanding, even if sometimes that invites unwanted sensations or pain.

What doesn't kill you can make you stronger; everyone's tolerance level is different so it's a delicate dance of exploring each other's capabilities and limits. Demonstrate a willingness to at least try, and don't try to impose your will as the only correct way. The spice must flow.



Spider

Invention,
Problem Solving



“What tangled webs we weave”

In order to design a new tool or solve a problem it is crucial to look at all the components and the way they all fit together. When on the surface it looks like all the right materials are being used, you are putting only good in and getting out bad results, the culprit more often than not lies in the joinery. Combining different types of materials with different properties requires exactly the right type of glue to bond characteristics which may be odds. As Alan Watts elegantly explains in the Zen Buddhist visualization of interconnectedness, the universe is like a multi-dimensional spider web covered in droplets of dew, reflected in each is every other one ad infinitum. The web itself appears to be the structure of the network, but the connection is actively happening in the light which vibrates in each reflection.

Just as we perceive the wavelengths of light as color, we sense gravity in proximity and touch. The energy of physical forms and their tendencies toward arranging themselves in such a way with one another is something we largely take for granted. We bust out the duct tape and try to force things together when they aren't bending to our will, we don't appreciate the differences in elasticity and break what isn't cooperating.

With patience, like a spider waiting for something to connect to its web, we can test and observe the tendencies of objects in our world. If one design or set up doesn't prove effective for catching flies, we can weave a new one and try again. Any practice we put forth into being able to make connections yields exponential returns, as the droplets on the strands, we are all reflecting one another and are connected by just a few degrees of separation to every single other person on earth.



Stag

Pride, Standing
Ground, Conviction



“Don’t pass the buck”

That pride comes before a fall is a universally regarded truth, and part of the reason it is traditionally defined as a sin. But the significance of the fall itself really sets it apart from the other cardinal failings, because it marks a conjunction of the mortals and the divine. It isn’t a physical sin, but a primordial one, the will to be a separate entity instead of part of the amorphous singularity.

The cosmological irony is that, for any aspect of god to descend into mortal form and become incarnated, messiahs included, and the notion of humans being made in the image of the creator, it utilizes this exact same mechanic. What makes one fall sacred, and another profane? Truly a debate for the ages, but in our case the workaround is delegation of hubris as

an extreme excess which is manifested to the detriment of others. Selfishness and narcissism which prey upon victims to provide sustenance for the parasite reveals itself in tyrants and dictators and causes immense suffering.

On the other hand, dependence and lack of self-reliance has the same effect just without the mask of confidence, so the only solution to being truly on equal footing is for each individual to be sovereign and free from debt to one another.

Make your definition of pride, therefore, the ability to stand in your own power, sovereign and independent, and the sensation of freedom that comes from knowing you aren't beholden to anyone else. Understand that such a stance requires you to take responsibility for your actions, be held accountable for not intruding on the boundaries of others, and defending your views when challenged. Like a buck sprouting antlers for fighting, some blood, sweat and tears will be spent just to become a contender, and once crowned you will be targeted. But it beats being doe-eyed and herded at the mercy of others authority.

Tiger

Victory,
Honor, Glory



“Catch a tiger by the toe”

There is no greater prize than the self. Standing in your power and reigning sovereign over your own being is the only victory that matters or lasts, as trophies gather dust and kingdoms come and go. Being the king in your own castle requires the ability to drive your enemies out; especially the ones that managed to disguise themselves as parts of you or were befriended during times of weakened standards.

Fight the good fight, inside and out! Cast away states of mind you find yourself which are bitter, cruel, or resentful. If you find in your own heart feelings which your sworn enemy might have about you,

you will have found the source of your undoing. Hunt down your demons one by one; this is what is meant by self-sacrifice.

From mastery within, the whole world lays before you as a field of glory on which to test your mettle. Hail to the victor, the one who had hundreds of reasons to fail but refused to lose themselves. Woe the defeated, who attribute only luck and providence in place of honor and willpower. They have already lost the battle within.



Tree

Temperance,
Abstinence from Excess

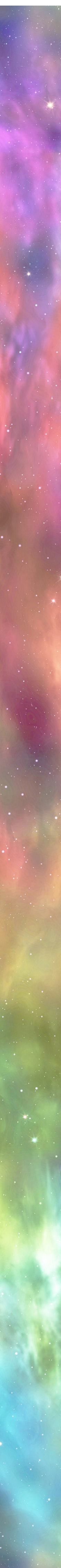


“The apple doesn’t fall from the tree”

There comes a time and a place to put down roots. While it’s important to travel and experience new things, establishing a stable base from which to experience the world can help prevent going too far overboard.

Nature doesn’t use things it doesn’t need, if plants were to grow too large in times of plenty they wouldn’t be able to sustain that mass when times are scarce. Instead, they put away the excess, grow at a steady rate, and invest heavily in their own infrastructure. We can emulate this behavior by culminating ourselves, when we encounter a windfall it’s a good idea to put it right back in to that which we have the most control over; us!

Lifelong learning, fitness, skill development, meditation, and self-care pay back in spades as future circumstances challenge us and call for readiness. Spending the time when you have extra is a great way to save yourself from losses further down the road. Nothing too much. Creating a culture of frugality and efficient use of resources in your life prevents discomfort and ensures that even in a crisis; you can make a little go a long way!



Turtle



Persistence,
Progress, Sovereignty

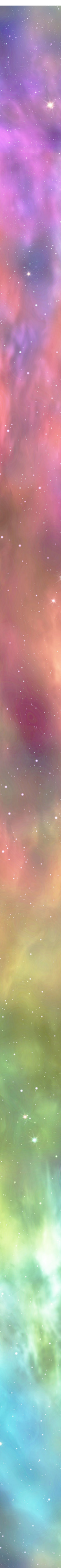
“Slow and steady wins the race”

Incremental changes are overlooked until they have accumulated a sufficient threshold to warrant notice. It's said a watched pot never boils, each single degree step seems ineffectual but you need every little one to get up to temp! Making small improvements in your life can feel pointless in the moment, as the results might not be seen until much farther down the line, but applying yourself and exercising discipline is the only way to get to that finish line. There are no shortcuts in the journey of life; people who come upon a large sum of money all at once tend to fritter it away immediately because they are unaccustomed to handling it. Better to build up slowly in order to be best

prepared for the big changes to come, in this way it is possible to be humble and integrated, standing in a place of wholeness and unable to be swayed by snares and temptations.

This life is for you to live at your own pace, when it comes to your own goals it isn't up to anyone else to set the speed.

The way you run the race is what determines the character of it. Those with short attention spans may cheer on only the swiftest but they will be onto something new in no time, and the sprinter's victory will be short lived. Enjoy the process, and pay attention to who was rooting for you the whole time, good people can appreciate a job well done.



Volcano

Creativity,
Potential



“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”

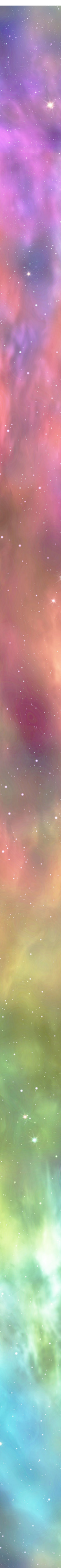
When a volcano becomes activated, a once placid scene quickly becomes the stage for hell on earth. Entire cities have been eaten alive by denial and defiance of the destructive potential hiding in nature. These instances are considered tragedies, and of all ‘disasters’ eruptions are by and large the most escapable due to our advances in monitoring technology.

As violent as such instances can be, they can also be the epicenter of spectacular creations. Entire island chains rise up out of the ocean and become a fertile paradise for diverse forms of life. Though they take away, they also give and treating this cycle of molten earth with respect is key, as it’s been going on since

the birth of the planet and will keep going on with or without us.

All sparks of creativity carry with them an element of danger, what is one day a godsend can the next be a plague if the proper precautions of moderation are not taken. Even the act of creative work itself can cause the artist to become inflamed, obsessed with this 'Fire in the Head,' singularly focused on it to the detriment of other areas of life.

New technologies can both enhance our quality of life, and then put it precariously at risk. So we must carefully identify the potential dangers within our inspiration, act with diligence and respect, and know when to get out of there when the time has come to evacuate.



Waterfall

Safety,
Security, Rest



“In perfect love and perfect trust”

We all need moments of reprieve, and a place to retreat to. There are places in nature that seem to have arranged themselves as perfect little escapes, and we should try to create those for ourselves as well.

If we can't do that with our homes themselves, it's important to go out and locate places where you can go to ground and reconnect, such as parks or gardens. Having a hiding spot that you know you can go to can grant some peace of mind in a busy world.

Socially, having a tribe or group you can trust and relate to is a rarity, but if you are lucky enough to find one it's a real treasure. Spaces free of judgement and supportive of your personal wellness and

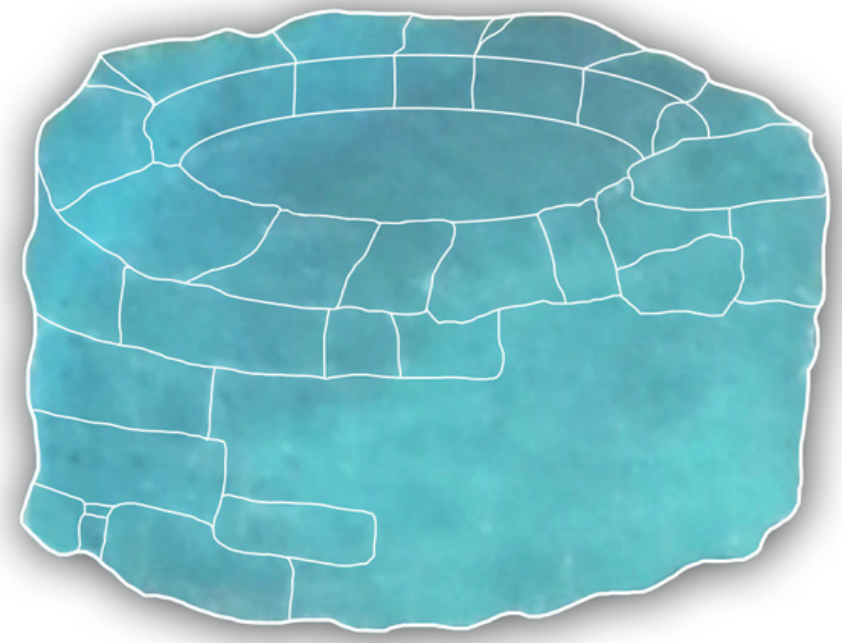
growth give you a stable base from which to venture out and take more daring risks in life. Don't be dissuaded from cultivating these, there is nothing weak about providing yourself the things you need to succeed.

Athletes train with all the necessary safety equipment before taking their abilities out for real, so any practice environment you can foster which gives you room to experiment and hone your talents is a great thing to have. There's no bonus points awarded for being thrown into the deep end every time with no opportunity to acclimate, it doesn't make you more hardcore to do so or make your experience more validated by taking a rugged individualist route. What really matters is how well you are able to perform that skill when the chips are down, not how long it took to master that skill or in what manner it was learned. You'll never reach the finish line if you don't stay in the race. So take a breather.



Well

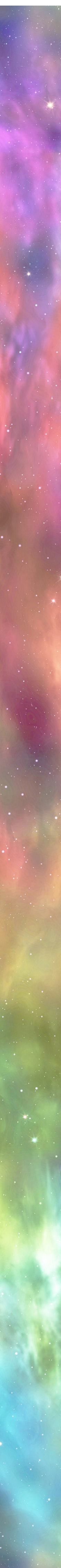
Peace,
Shared Blessings



“A rising tide lifts all boats”

Setting a high standard raises the bar for everything else in proximity. All energy in the universe abides by the same laws, such as inertia which describes tendency to continue along a course. So putting energy into a system makes more available to the interactions within the whole of it, generosity of spirit will always have a ripple effect out into the environment. There is no higher calling than the pursuit of peace, so it is always worth it to spare a little good will where possible.

After all, we can't take it with us when we are gone. Everything we are and have are borrowed anyway. You never know who could use a little pick me up, and the cascade of consequences as they pay the favor forward! Like a penny thrown into a well to make a wish, as more people do that the water level slowly rises. It may seem like just a drop in the ocean, but after all, what is the sea but a collection of drops?



Wheat

Prudence, Practicality,
Gratitude

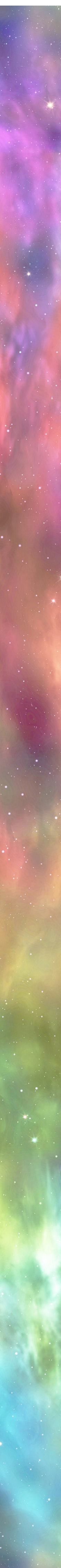


“Separate the wheat from chaff”

Though we are in the midst of an anti-carb revolution, there is no denying the profound impact that agriculture, and specifically the ability to produce flour has had on our civilization. Going from hunter gatherers who were totally dependent upon availability of food in the environment, to masters of preservation allowed us to command much larger populations. These demanded a more sophisticated infrastructure and led to the innovations in urban living we depend on today. For better or for worse, supply and demand now drive our lifestyles.

In order to take back some control over our personal evolution, it's crucial to pay homage to the mechanisms that brought

us to this point. If you have never attempted to bake bread from scratch, I highly recommend doing so. It is one of the many things we take for granted, by the end of it I guarantee you will have a newfound gratitude for modern conveniences, and also a lot more insight into why the supply chain is such as it is. That people can be starving amidst such unprecedented abundance is nothing short of a travesty. And in order to address it, we should go to the heart of the problem. The answers are often hiding in plain sight if you take the time to stare down the uncomfortable thing we would all rather look away from for long enough. Food might seem like something easy to overlook, when taking up a cause it's not a very glamorous one but somehow we have come to a point where people can die from eating too much. I would rank this totem up there with the lions and wolves. The humble grain has come to pose more of a danger to us than the beasts that stalked our ancestors. It tells us to be practical, no longer the cream of the crop; we must recalibrate our thinking on convenience and its costs.



Will o Wisp

Wishes, Hope,
Sincerity



“Throw caution to the wind”

When you see a shooting star, do you make a wish? You should, and if it doesn't come easily to think of one right in that moment, that's something you need to take a look at.

Take some time and do some journaling about your long term goals, ask yourself questions like, 'if money was no object, where would I travel' or 'if I won the lottery, what would I do with it?' not because these are happenings you are necessarily banking on, but because looking at those kind of broad topics without constraints might give you a really honest perspective on what it is you really want.

Once you nail down just what that is, you can start to ask yourself what is really

standing in the way of you getting those things, or what steps you might start taking to work your way toward your goals. You will be amazed how quickly you can make headway toward your objective once you know where it is! If it's something that would make you happy, go ahead and think about it when you blow out your birthday candle.

Go ahead and whisper it at the New Year's sunrise. It doesn't cost anything to let your imagination run wild, you might accidentally find something you can actually have. Don't go through life telling yourself you don't deserve things or that they aren't available to you, or that you have to narrow it down just in case you find a genie lamp and only get 3 tries. You could have it all. But you have to see it in your mind's eye first, or you might not recognize it when you find it.



Wyvern

Heroism,
Protection



“Comes with the territory”

Sometimes the situation calls for a highly idealistic and somewhat ridiculous attitude. Common sense dictates, ‘don’t be a hero!’, but if everyone does that all the time the bad guys get away with it. If we all take turns on it, nobody has to give up their whole life and take on a secret identity to keep the darkness at bay. How much more effective is justice if it could come from anywhere? Then people of ill intent can’t just try to tiptoe around sources of punishment and it’s built into the value system.

However, there are truly unstable people who can cause terrible damage and it isn’t your place to put yourself in danger unarmed for the sake of someone else. If you’re already in it, and you believe that

your intervention could positively affect the outcome, would you want to wait around and hope that someone else does it for you?

Take a moment to meditate on some emergency situations, and think about what you would really do. Real talk, if you can identify something which would better prepare you for the unknown, at the very least you could end up protecting your own life. “Those who are armed with weapons and knowledge of how to use them, but choose instead to sheath them shall inherit the earth.” It’s not necessarily meant to be literal; it could be, but I think what it means is taking steps toward preparedness, physically and mentally, and doing so for the sake of protection rather than tyranny or to lord over others is the way in which we overcome the evil lurking deep in every heart. Especially our own. It’s a conscious choice we have to make, and it's better to do so ahead of the crisis.



Yak

Liberty, Nobility
of Spirit

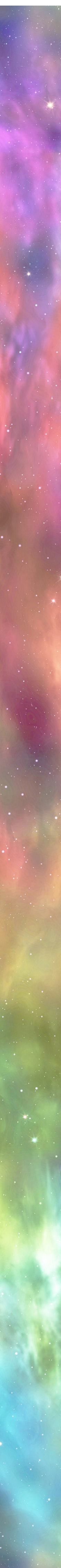


“Put the ox before the cart”

What is keeping you from your freedom, right now, what are you beholden to? What makes up the yoke around your neck, and what would it take to take it off? We make a lot of concessions in life for the sake of security, only to find later it can all be taken away from us anyway, even when we have chosen what should have been the correct course.

Wherever possible, figure out what it takes to stand on your own two feet and not be reliant on someone to lead you through the treacherous mountain paths. A good situation should have you working as a team, a seasoned herder needs his oxen as much as they need him and they make it through together safely.

Take some power back in your situation and negotiate terms that aren't favorable to you, don't assume you are just at the mercy of whatever you are being offered. And if you are, get yourself out of there because it's going nowhere and leaving you very vulnerable to change. Make sure there is respect in your partnership, and it isn't one sided. Your freedom isn't for sale, you might be trading some of the hours out of your day in exchange for resources you need for other things, but at the end of the day your work doesn't own you.



OUTCOMES:

Earth - Fire - Air - Water


In the clearing, a rabbit sits up on its haunches petrified. It knows not what it's done wrong, how it's come to this, or where to go now, but it knows it must run. The smell of rain hasn't hung in the air here for a very long time, everything in the forest knows it, but a consensus couldn't be reached on what to do. So they stayed, carefully, praying for rain and waiting for that familiar smell of disaster with deep fear in their hearts.

The crackle. The smoke. It happens cyclically, but things are different now, not even the sunrise seems certain and no one can know if this destruction will be brought under control this time. The beasts are powerless in the face of this adversary. Now the humans rise up to fight for the sake of their homeland and an awkward truce is made. Fear and hope are hand in hand, as those in pain and in need of change watch in terror and grief as their desire is made real.

Wishes granted become bitter regrets as they are humbled in the face of true uncertainty. Unlike them, the ancient trees shudder with discomfort, but smile deep inside their rings at the thought of the nourishment and bright new sunlight this burnout will grant... provided of course, the sun does rise.

Earth - Fire - Water - Air

A painting of a woman hangs in a museum, a vision of classic beauty. One would never guess it was this blessed image that started the war and set these fires blazing that now engulfed the domed building. A muse delighted and a love scorned planted a hateful seed in a heart overcome by grief and rage, and as his armies ravaged country after country it seemed as though none would rise to answer. Covert operations and guerilla tactics waged bravely on into the night, but the losses were great, and evil was growing in boldness. Individual sacrifices could not stem the waves of fear gripping the world, and in quiet places



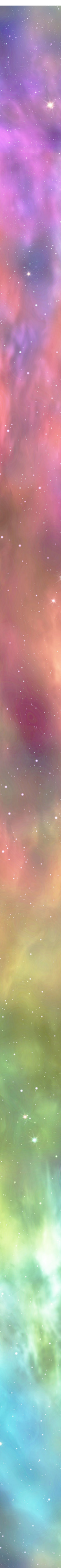
pleas were made for something drastic which would vanquish the menace. The call was answered by wicked men who had willfully chosen to misunderstand, and in insult to injury they rained down hellfire over this noncombatant target where so much love had been born.

There were none left here but the prisoners and weak, and the fires raged at them with blistering scorn. Some had been able to hide away, but their makeshift bomb shelters could not shield them from the sound of superheated concrete exploding, revealing the vulnerable truth inside and melting it away before anyone noticed. Eventually the ashes smoldered down to a dull roar, and the rains eventually came to soften them into smoke. It wafted in thick clouds up from this would have been battlefield, now just a ruin of a dream. The refugees emerge from their dugouts, surveying an ashen land and uncertain future. But like trailblazers dousing a campfire and hitting the trail once more they picked

up their courage and moved on.

Earth - Air - Fire - Water

Perched atop a craggy outcrop there is a house by the sea. It is both home, and beacon, a guiding light to help sailors avoid the perilous shore, but perhaps this humble station is greater than the sum of those. Powered by the astral immolation of a distant star, its light is eternal and unyielding. Showing us a better way forward and saving us from hazards both natural and manmade, and it's form is perfectly at home in the nation that championed its existence. Even in coldness, the people there huddle together and do not let frigid scarcity into their hearts. They are generous of spirit, and shine out into the world with fresh ideas about equality and justice, willingness to learn and patiently monitor the results of hypotheses they are testing. Nothing is urgent, but justice is swift. Sharp convictions help prevent the exhaustion of pouring over decisions, and that time



is better used on quiet contemplation.


Earth - Air - Water - Fire

The smell of freshness pervades everything that steps outside after the long cold of seclusion. It is wet and heavy, and sticks to everything it touches, moisturizing and enervating with a manic intensity as it tries to make everything flourish. Plants can't help but burst to life, doubling over themselves with blooms and sprouts, pouring forward into the world and lapping up the sweet spring sunshine as though they had been dried to a desert husk. Colorful ribbons stretch out into the breeze and the eye catches every flash seeking attention, darting around with a keen desire to be this way here and now. Perhaps even forever, if one could save its scent and lusciousness. Engorged and enraptured, every heart turns now to generosity, heaping praise upon every deserving sight. Things are beautiful if you love them, and now after all that has happened such love is not lessened or

stifled in any way, and more is simply more.

Earth - Water - Air - Fire

Hard lines surround the walkers, imprisoning their minds in the rigid geometry which has been constructed all around them. The entire world is grey and bleak. What used to feel so orderly, predictable and safe, is now a sentence for internment in eternal sadness and despair. You can reach out to touch, but it will be gritty and cold, if you were to fall onto its surface it would abrade your skin in an itchy hot rash. Covered in calluses, and exhausted from work, one begins to feel like a fixture of the place and extension of its unyielding structure. The trade seemed advantageous, the dirt for the stone, it was an obvious upgrade to anyone with a mind for thinking. But enough time has elapsed that the occupants have forgotten how to feel, and what once was a playground of concrete, steel and glass, full of nooks and crannies to climb



and explore has forfeited its secrets. Tall buildings house small ideas and high stakes claimed their share of risk takers. Where maze runners once tested their courage against heights and angles, scaling vertical surfaces and vaulting pylons with Olympian grace, disinterested pigeons perch. They are grey too.


Earth - Water - Fire - Air

After a long year of laughing and learning a mix/matched family comes together to give thanks. The colors and smells delight the senses, and time is taken to get to know one another just that little bit better as the hunt for glory is momentarily abated for this period of rest. They have practiced their recipes on one another on humble evenings and average workdays, and trialed and errored and come up with some pretty heartfelt flavors. Altogether, on full display and in the right sampling proportions, any flaws are indecipherable among the banquet of

delicacies. Simple ingredients are used well and arranged with love, each person giving a part of themselves along with this wish for their kin to not hunger or thirst. Abundance is seen, felt, and demonstrated, in force enough to stave off the hardships that might be known in the coming year. The table is long and highly decorated, nobody is left out, and room is made for any newcomer where they are treated just like the oldest of friends.

Fire - Earth - Air - Water

An errant knight wanders the ruins of a long forsaken kingdom, growing lonelier and darker by the day. Whatever his code, cause, or loyalty might have been in days gone by; only echoes remain in the hollow of his heart. He serves no king, seeks no glory, and answers no charge. Yet, he cannot be glad of his freedom, because though he can come and go as he pleases to every once great and noble place, without a quest to guide him he can only feel loss. Caverns and towers,



treacherous structures crumbling with time, all welcome him the same and offer up their challenges. But there is no fair maiden to grant favor, and no heraldry to reward him. In the distance he spots a flickering light, at first he mistakes it for the glint off a sword, but as he draws closer he can see it is a bonfire. He sits himself beside it to warm his cold bones, and wonder on who could have lit it, feeling alive once again at the thought of not being truly alone.


Fire - Earth - Water - Air

The fall fire crackles boldly in the crisp air, having been tended by the night watch for the whole week prior. The head hunter lights his torch from it, and passes the hearth flame along to each of the others gathered in a circle, quiet and intense. All of the meat that was once safe to gather has been eaten off long ago and the creatures who have evolved here in the aftermath of rapid change are both cunning and impossibly strong. Foes the likes of this have not been seen

since primal times, and their resurgence has forced our brave tribe to regress to appropriately savage ways in response. Razor sharp spears have been upgraded with taser shock, and projectile launchers boast both high velocity and knockback force. It will take each one of them working in perfect synergy to ensure each gets to return alive. They touch spear tips to one another's hearts in perfect love and trust before beginning to lift deep rumbling whoops up from their rib cages. They bellow and push their vigor up from foot to crown, each standing victorious in the face of the yet to be won challenge, for if you can't visualize the win before the battle, you have already lost.

Fire - Water - Air - Earth

Perched atop a delicate porcelain spire, an amber hued orb burns with light. As the sun's rays pass through it, that glow radiates out and kisses the face of every person, building and plant, caressing




them with warmth and energy. There is a vitality here as everyone moves in rhythmic mindfulness, instead of droning through tasks they take great care to greet each other and every interaction as a beautiful happening.

Below the surface, well designed machines carry out tasks not fit for human hands, and the pace of life is able to continue in a way conducive to authenticity instead of strain. Fruit trees burst forth with seemingly endless abundance, their pollinators are no longer threatened, in fact they are emboldened in the gentle heat. People take great care to craft fine things from juices and nuts; they eat and drink without harming. Nobody feels deprived or fights for things to be as they were in times of scarcity. They study their history well and have no desire whatsoever to repeat it. Everyone is content, alert, and present, under the loving gaze of the sacred jewel enervating everything. Children play endlessly, with bright colored clothes

and shining faces, unburdened with expectations they are surpassing any that a parent could ever have.

Fire - Water - Earth - Air

Words left unsaid, love left unproclaimed. Pangs of regret, bitter tears wept at the loss of all that could have been. These sorrows and more are lovingly written though blurry eyes and shaky hands on tiny paper lanterns, and sad goodbyes are whispered out to them as they set adrift on calm waters for parts unknown. Prayers sail off into the night, just a few at first, now joined by hundreds more, until the offerings clump together in a pulsing gleaming form on the horizon. Moving resolutely onward the armada takes on a life of its own. Dreams, hopes, and fears all shine together in these little manifestations of human feeling. Silently, the mantras of life long suffering reach a fever pitch. Waves of new mourners add their offerings and pour out their feelings



hotly into the cold indifferent waters.
The onlookers do not expect a response;
those little boats are making a one way
journey, as are we all.

Fire - Air - Earth - Water


Brightly colored clouds dance together
against a backdrop of purest blackness.

The glow and hum of particles being
drawn to each other can be seen from
galaxies away, each tender moment of
cosmic connection beams straight across
the universe. From inside, the rainbow of
gases swirls around with languid
indifference, waltzing unaware to the
miracle of their activity. In this crucible of
creation, new stars are being born,
crafted out of the far flung remains from
supernovas of the past. The splendor of a
thousand potential suns shimmers in the
night sky, singing the anthem of creation
in the harmony of the spheres. Each
newborn may someday illuminate and
warm a system of its own, perhaps even a
tiny blue dot with the right conditions to
support life. And maybe, someday when

its own core gives out and bursts forth with elemental fury, those specks of stardust will find themselves making up the body of a sentient being, capable of looking up to the stars and knowing they are one.

Fire - Air - Water - Earth

Desperate times call for desperate measures. Like a boat full of holes, the land began taking on water in all the wrong places, powerful storm fronts take a bit more with each assault. With no way left to patch over, everyone began bailing frantically and each bucketful was brought right back a hundred fold. So a tower was built on the coast to raise up the very sea from its bed, and route it inland, flowing like a river in the sky from the wettest environment on into the heart of the driest desert. Long shadows were cast from the giant pillars at each waypoint, and the whole scaffold looked gaudy against the sky, but the time for aesthetic consideration had long since passed. At the end of its run, it was the only feature for miles, pouring out



millions of gallons of saline straight onto the scalding sands below. It evaporated almost instantly, surging upward with angry steam and obscuring the stark dune backdrop with soft mist. Though near invisible during the day, the nights came to life with the soothing sound of water rushing, and the clouds began to gather on high. Salt crystals had piled up quickly into towering spires, and this once hellish and inhospitable landscape was beginning to look like something out of a fairy tale.


Air - Fire - Water - Earth

From space, the stars look on and wonder if this cluster of flickering lights is a galaxy just like theirs. A million points sparkle with productive intensity as the city hums with electric life. It is always turned on; always flowing like each individual is a current in a wire, pushing each other along ever forward. Many are on autopilot, many are machines, the push does not discriminate between the sleeping and awake and many are content to lay back and let it take them into the

stream of never-ending light. They do not feel a need to shine out on their own, how would one distinguish such a tiny spark among this neon blaze? A woman slides her aqua tinted glasses up the bridge of her nose, and as they click into place over her earpiece the outside glazes over with cold one way chrome. The deafening roar of light and color outside is instantly stilled, and she sees the world objectively, free from flashing ads and propaganda billboards, strobing storefronts and dizzying distractions. She sees the shambling husks around her, hunched over with nihilistic self-loathing, feeling ugly among all the pretty lights. They are beautiful to her.

Air - Fire - Earth - Water

Dust kicks up around where a scruffy looking dog is rooting around. He had been wandering about the old farmland aimlessly all day, but now turned with unusual attention to this particular spot in the ground. Pushing both paws as deep as he could manage into the cracked soil, he might not have been the best tool for the



job but he was certainly trying his hardest. Across the way on a quad his owner had been halfheartedly looking for him and now made his way over to see what the commotion was about. Flipping a collapsible shovel out, the boy and his dog continued to excavate this now sizeable crater, and the dust cloud seen for miles around draws in onlookers to aid them. The dig carries on into the night, crimson flares spark off, generators are wheeled in to power work lights, and whether out of boredom or collective goal the rag tag team of amateur anthropologists cooperate. A large, carved stone facade begins to reveal itself from the dirt; row after row of entwined human faces peers up at the bewildered viewers. Eyes, wings, symbols and lips are all arranged in a peculiar but intentional way, and as the participants line up and lean in to squint at them, they begin to look a lot like that sculptural arrangement.

Air - Water - Fire - Earth

Tick, tock. Tick, tock. The life clocks tick down with frigid finality, and all the pawns

move around in their predetermined hedonistic pursuits. Everything is pleasant, and nothing hurts. Pretty faces smile empty smiles at each other, and flit around frivolously with nothing in particular to do. They are sterile, and none of their love has any consequence, each one replaceable in every way so nobody ever gets hurt. No regard for the devastation of the outer world beyond the dome. They are killed off before they stop being beautiful, and a replacement is immediately dispatched to take their place in this fragile homeostasis, but the fear of death still hangs over them. All the selective breeding and chemicals can't extinguish that instinctive terror fully, and some of them choose to try and elude death, only to be greeted with it directly in the form of its enforcers. Why do they run? Who could want anything else but this, to never grow old or sick and suffer? In this little bubble they are safe from everything but themselves. And with no meaningful ties there are no grudges to be had, no bad blood or betrayal, they operate under the same parameters and



live in a state of equality and bliss. Isn't that what we want?


Air - Water - Earth - Fire

In pursuit of cheap exploitable labor, scientists found they were able to grow obedient worker clones. Row after row of tanks emit an eerie blueish green light, bubbling up with amniotic nutrients and their occupants float on in dreamless sleep, innocent and unaware of the nightmare that awaits them once they wake. One of the tanks initiates its evacuation protocol as its harvest comes to full ripening, and the cloudy fluid spills out into the grate drains in the floor. Robotic arms whir about removing all the life support tubes from the specimen, a hypodermic needle extends to inject it with a stimulant. It chokes and gasps, coughing out fluid, opening its eyes and snapping into consciousness, albeit a genetically curated one. The clone is extracted, cleaned, dressed, and sent out into the world without a single act of nurturing love, and fully formed it

attends to its retail duties with the same enthusiasm as it's naturally born counterparts. It is all that is needed or expected, but life will find a way.

Air - Earth - Fire - Water

A monk's steady hand guides a cone of sand back and forth with superhuman focus. The colorful grains spill out and pile up in tidy stacks, each one a crystal in its own right if you turn our gaze in close enough. But with every step back that is taken a more profound and detailed pattern reveals, each segment an integral part of a whole that is more and more impressive the farther outside it one is. The amazing formations of silica structure one would find if the tiniest units of sand were zoomed in under a microscope are reflected in the overall painting created with millions of them together. There is harmony in the shapes, meaning in the colors, and the eye could rest their easy gazing up on this palace of the gods completely at home in it. Everything in its proper place, including



you, standing there in this moment of watchfulness, aware of the quiet and unafraid. There is nowhere else any speck of stardust in the universe is supposed to be in that moment, everything is exactly right. Just as your mind resolves to lose itself, a quick swipe of the hand sends the perfect image into chaos and blurs the lines all together. The other monks join in the destructive revelry, and where this magnificent painting just was; now nothing remains. Just dust in the wind.


Air - Earth - Water - Fire

With a sigh and a crumple what just a moment ago was an elaborate string of computations is now a ball of defeated paper on the floor among dozens of others. If they could speak, surely they would say ‘she was on the right track, he’s getting really close!’ But admitting that she hears that would surely be an admission of just how far from the answer, and furthermore sanity, she really is. Close is just not good enough, she feels no closer to his distant goal

than a moth does to a flame... until it's too late. So engrossed she is with this task at hand, that the answer eludes her just out of sight among the crumplings, not in their markings, but the nature of their shape. She daydreams off about that distant place she would rather be so badly, feels crushed by the weight of people counting on her to be right about everything. She is already everywhere but where she is, in a way, she's figured out space travel already.

Water - Air - Fire - Earth

It was a good idea at the time, but what began as a contrived resort paradise quickly broke down into chaos. In decadent hubris, they thought they could create waterfront property in the middle of the desert, unfettered by the reality of the most primal laws of matter and motion. Crystal blue waters and decadent bungalows lost their picturesque appeal as environmental degradation took its toll. Like a winter frost, a white crust began to form along the receding



waterline, and droves of dead fish wash up and begin reeking in the hot desert sun. As the hipsters evacuate, the squatters move in, taking no offense to the smell or corrosion and finding ample space to build a world among the ruins. A sophisticated society springs up out of the scraps left behind, and the hopes and dreams of travel hardened people play out in colorful expressions among the concrete. Though an ecological disaster looms nearby, for some here this is the little slice of paradise that the original settlers were too thin skinned to see.

Water - Air - Earth - Fire

A snorkeler emerges to the surface at the end of a fulfilling day at his coral polyp farm. Under his watchful eye, the babies blossom forth in mild waters. He hauls up onto the dock and shucks off his gear, rinsing off and changing before heading further inward on this hulking man-made island. His and thousands of other agricultural experiments and ranches make up the outermost ring, being in

direct contact with an ocean most at the center are only vaguely aware of being afloat on at any given time. It's like any other city, with ring after ring of homes, apartments, parks, fields, gardens, and close to the city center every manner of urban amenity. Our young farmer hops on a tram and heads to the agora district, where stalls and tents spill over with abundant produce, but not a single coin will be exchanged. All who live and work here operate under a sacred creed of mutually assured victory, and the harvest is distributed to anyone who chooses it. He walks into a cafe and orders his lunch, which will be made with all fresh ingredients from the market outside, and a complete stranger walks up and asks if he'd like some company. He enjoys a very pleasant afternoon, under no pressure to pinch pennies or watch the clock, and shares stories about his lovely children who grow and flourish with no threat of cut funding.

Water - Earth - Air - Fire

A million colorful bottles giggle on the shelves of the chemist's lab. "Drink me!" They chime playfully, and some of them make their way into the outside world in various formulations, making changes to the shape and size of things. What once was small now grows quite tall! Life is like a beanstalk, finding ways around and up and through to find the richest sources of life giving nourishment. The madness that had gripped man's world to bring about this rapid change now plays out in the environment with wild and wondrous sights. The shapeshifter's mischief plays tricks of rampant growth amidst a different atmospheric composition, and new flowers find their day in the sun. Water lilies stretch their pads out as wide as a child's imagination and bear loads previously unheard of outside of fairy tales. The river folk just shrug, and make fine boats out of them to ship their gigantic berries and beans along the waterway for trade. What use is there to panic?

Water - Earth - Fire - Air

As a soul converges in a body for the temporary truce of life, all the elements of the world came together to bind this tiny artifact to our mortal realm. A star fallen from heaven, or piece of one at least. What was one molten light came cataclysmically to rest in this humble river by way of cosmic force, the moment of impact obscured by centuries passing. It parted the atmosphere to get here, and now accepts it's station among the common pebbles in the riverbed, washed over by the same molecules of water that have circulated this sky since the world was made, both infinitely splendid and undeniably common at the same time. A human steps into the river to bathe, and to think, and her foot brushes against its crystalline surface so unlike the smoothed over stones. She pulls it out of the water out into the light, and it shines out with alien brilliance, green like the fire in her eyes. She smiles, and sings to it, her new favorite thing which reminds her so much of herself.

Water - Fire - Air - Earth

On the brink of a tremendous discovery, a scientist surges with adrenaline and excitement. The implications of his findings are utterly lost on him in this moment; his muse drives him ever onward in pursuit of truth. This in and of itself is not at all a bad thing, as no science is truly evil, it is simply a knowing of the world, but this forbidden knowledge is to fall into heartless hands. In the hands of a child, the truth is like a bright red string, eye catching, tempting, being threaded between the fingers to form lines and shapes. He then holds it out to the onlooker for them to admire his cleverness, see how cool this is!' he says. The onlooker simply smiles and nods, unaware of the dangerous weapon this child holds in his hands, so the boy continues his show and tell to whoever will divulge some enthusiasm. He finds that admiration in the menacing grin of an evil man hell bent on destruction, the innocent play of the child falls away to reveal terror and shame as the truth finally dawns.

Water - Fire - Earth - Air

Deep underground there is river of rock flowing hotly. Subterranean reservoirs get superheated, and explode up to the surface in scalding fountains. This wasteland is home to a host of hulking beasts made out of metal. They wander in herds reminiscent of long extinct animals, and even mimic their mannerisms while terraforming this inhospitable expanse into a lush valley suitable for future forms of life. Although they are not sentient, one could hardly distinguish them from their organic predecessors, both in form and function.

Each is a masterful recreation of a bygone world, designed with the utmost care by a loving mother who long ago passed on. As they tend the soil in this dangerous territory one can't help but feel in awe of life's ability to perpetuate itself, employing even this lost generation of life givers who themselves are not truly experiencing it.

What sacrifices their makers went through to artifice them into being. How will their mechanical legacy be remembered by the ones who will inherit this paradise from them?



Explore the Fables:



**Humans have used the stars
as guiding lights to navigate by
for thousands of years.**

**Let them illuminate your own life
journey with this collection of modern
myths! These tales follow after the
ancient fable storytelling tradition,
reimagined for application to our
everyday life challenges.**

